PRINCE OF DARKNESS
WESTHOUSE

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WITCHCULT SATANISM SORCERY LYCANTHROPY

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1946

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INTRODUCTION

WITCHCRAFT COVERS A multitude of sins. So many, in fact, with such numberless ramifications and side issues, that, in the confines of a single book, it would be impossible to include them all. I have, therefore, chosen only the more interesting aspects of this exhaustive subject. The result is, I think, as wide and varied a collection of fact and fiction as the limitations of space permit. With such a vast quantity of material to choose from, it was more a question of what to leave out than of what to put in. I hope that nothing pertinent has been omitted. Each section has been arranged under its appropriate heading, the factual account being followed by a fractional treatment of the same theme. I am deeply indebted to Doctor Montague Summers for much of my information, but a full acknowledgment to the various authors who have kindly permitted me to use their material will be found on another page.

Witchcraft is an absorbing subject and whether you approach it as a sceptic, a believer, or just one of those people who adopt a 'well, there *may* be something in it' attitude, I am sure that in the following pages you will find something to interest you.

GERALD VERNER

March 1946

I

WITCHCULT

SECTION ONE
THE WITCH-CULT
I
THE COVENS

BY GERALD VERNER

'Midnight, and the air is foul
With flying figures rushing fast
Toward the wood. A ghastly band, they howl
And shriek with frenzied glee as they go past
Into the night to meet Asmodeus.
A dreadful chorus, with a wailing croon,
Across the fair face of the witches' moon.'

SECTION ONE
THE WITCH-CULT
I
THE COVENS

THE HISTORY OF WITCHCRAFT is a fascinating study, and the deeper one delves into it, the more convinced one becomes of the extreme credulity of the

people of the period in which it was rampant. Although there is no lack of evidence that a great number of alleged witches existed, there is no evidence at all that they were able to perform any acts that can be legitimately ascribed to magic. Indeed, the mass of evidence available rather tends to show that they possessed no supernatural powers whatsoever, for surely if they had they would have made use of them when they were tortured, tried, condemned, and burned at the stake? If they were capable of rendering themselves invisible; of transporting themselves instantly, and at will, from one place to another in the twinkling of an eye; of changing into cats and hares and other animals; of casting fearsome spells, and destroying their enemies with a lightning flash, this was the moment when they should have turned on the full force of their power, summoned all their demons, and extricated themselves from their terrible predicament. But they did none of these things. In point of actual fact, they did nothing more than the local charwoman would have done in similar circumstances. Under the hideous tortures to which they were subjected they confessed to all sorts of things, but it is a well-known fact that people in America, after undergoing the third degree, have confessed to murders which they never committed. For the most part, then, it would seem that the majority of these witches were just rather unpleasant women who dabbled in making potions and philtres, told fortunes, prepared charms and amulets, and stuck pins in little wax images of their enemies in the belief that the effect they desired would be thereby achieved. There appears to be very little

doubt that quite a number of these alleged witches were evil-living, given to sexual debauchery, worshippers of Satan, and capable of every conceivable abomination, but that they possessed the powers with which they were credited seems extremely doubtful. But that is not to say that they did not believe in witchcraft, pacts with the Devil, and all the attendant mumbo-jumbo. It seems very evident that they did and, in some cases, very probably, imagined that they were the possessors of supernatural powers conferred on them by a covenant with Satan. Whether this be true or not, there is no gainsaying that there existed all over the country, and in other countries too, sects of people who practised witchcraft and sorcery with all the hideous, blasphemous, and obscene rites associated with the cult, and that the Sabbats were a definitely established fact. The covens were to be found in most villages and towns—groups of witches commanded by a Grand Master who acted as a kind of first lieutenant to the Devil and sometimes took his place at the Sabbats. A case in point is that of the Rev. George Burroughs and the coven of witches that existed in Salem in 1692. At the Sabbats it was reported that the presiding demon often beat those who had not done enough evil; and even in some of the lesser meetings of the covens the directors would strike those who failed to keep in with the ceremonies; it happened in the famous North Berwick meeting in 1590.*

The covens were rather like a secret society under the leadership of a President who directed all the operations, and one can quite well imagine how

* *Witchcraft:* Charles Williams.

such an idea would appeal to the perverted and the evil-minded. The whole thing was hideous, beastly, but terribly exciting, and the fact that it was dangerous and had to be conducted with absolute secrecy only added to its charm. The members of a local coven felt that *they* were different from their fellow beings—as indeed they were—and the Sabbats provided an excuse for unbridled lust and sexuality with the additional thrill that it was blasphemous, evil, and horribly depraved. There have always been plenty of people in the world who can only find amusement in something *outre* and *bizarre,* and to these witchcraft and the goetic life must have appealed strongly. They led a different and separate life from other persons—a life which they shared with a favoured few and which nobody else knew anything about. A very fascinating thing to some minds.

There were no fixed periods for the Sabbats. The time and place was usually arranged by the leader of the coven, or perhaps the leaders of several covens would arrange for a large gathering, and it was generally held in some secluded and secret place—sometimes indoors and sometimes in the open, depending on circumstances—and always at night. The Devil's time of greatest power was believed to be from sunset to cock-crow. The assembly were often disguised as animals, but this was not always the case. It would seem that it was left to individual discretion. Mr. Charles Williams says: 'Even the President did not always, though he did generally, appear as a beast. The President was occasionally the local ruler, but usually he was more; and if he were not more, yet he was felt as

more; the lesser ruler was attached to the greater, and the man in the skin, the mask and head-dress, and the claws and tail, was identified with the pseudo-God. He was called the Devil; he was adored as the Devil; and, metaphysically, he may have been the Devil.

'That, anyhow, was adored. The company whirled round it in their dances, where it sat, perhaps on a rock or a throne in their midst. The most general appearance was in the shape of a great goat. . . . Its posterior, or fundament (as it is often called) seemed to be a face also. The grand homage was done by kissing it there, and obscenely. The whole ritual was obscene in its nature, therefore in its details; no kiss there was anything but obscene, and the body which was meant to carry all its members into gay honour and holy joy here reduced all to an indefinable degradation of putrescence. They sidled and slid towards the giant horned thing, and abased themselves under it and thrilled and adored: "grand siegneur," "nostre dieu," "dominus dieu" . . .'

The celebration of the Black Mass was one of the chief rites of the Sabbat but this could only properly be done if an ordained priest were a member of the assembly, or if the consecrated Host had been stolen. After this the entire company gave themselves up to orgies of the most filthy and debauched character, including every sexual perversion it is possible to conceive.

It has been suggested that in some cases the orgies of the Sabbat only took place in the subconscious minds of the participants, and instances have been brought forward to prove that the alleged witches,

who had declared that they had attended the diabolical revels, with full details of what had taken place, had all the while been lying asleep in their beds. This may be true of some isolated cases but there can be little argument that the Sabbats did, in actuality, take place, and that even those persons must have had previous *practical* experience of them to have been able to imagine or dream an account that tallied so perfectly with all the main facts. What is debatable is whether there was anything supernatural about these meetings, or whether they were merely depraved gatherings instituted to satisfy the distorted minds of the members of the covens, much the same, though infinitely worse, as the obscene amusements of pre-war Paris, which specially existed for visitors from abroad who expected to be regaled with that class of entertainment. The age-old principle of demand and supply.

This seems to be borne out by the case of Gilles de Rais, the following account of which is quoted at length from Doctor Montague Summers's book, *The Geography of Witchcraft*. He says:

'Gilles de Rais was born about 1404 in the Chateau of Machecoul, which lies on the borders of Brittany and Anjou. On the 30th of November, 1420, when he was at the most seventeen years of age, Gilles de Rais married Catherine de Thonars, by which union he became one of the wealthiest, perhaps *the* wealthiest, noble in Europe.

'He scattered his riches in luxurious and magnificent living in a style that had never before been surpassed in history, and it is not surprising that

even his vast resources eventually began to feel the strain.

'For a long while Gilles de Rais had experimented in alchemy and sought the philosopher's stone, and now he began the quest in real earnest under the guidance of a famous occultist of the day, Gilles de Sille, a priest of St. Malo. Vast sums were expended; gold and silver melted in crucible and retorts; but without result. One of de Rais's chaplains, Eustache Blanchet, set out for Italy to discover some master of the craft but, in the meantime, Gilles de Rais seems to have determined to have recourse to demoniac powers to assist him. He applied to Jean de la Riviére, a sorcerer, who had just come from Portiers, but spells and incantations proved unavailing. A second warlock, named Du Mesnil, persuaded Gilles to sign with his blood a parchment swearing to give the Devil all he demanded "*hormis sa vie et son âme*" and in order to strengthen the evocation, the Office of the Damned was chanted in the chapel at midnight on the Feast of All Saints.

'Shortly afterwards Blanchet returned from Italy bringing with him Francesco Prelati, a Florentine priest. Prelati, who was a scholar and a man of extraordinary charm, soon gained complete ascendency over Gilles de Rais, and then began that hideous series of murders, blasphemies, and abominations which seem to have exhausted the foulest depths of Black Magic. Satan, declared the wizard, must be propitiated by blood, the blood of children. He would thus show himself favourable and heap riches upon his devoted servants. The name of the first victim of Gilles de Rais is un-

known. It appears to have been a young boy, who was enticed one evening to the castle, and when in a secret chamber the erotomaniac had satiated his lust upon this unhappy child, they suddenly strangled their outraged prey, and cutting the heart from the warm body offered the young limbs that yet quivered and writhed with agony to the Demon whom they invoked with the most horrible oaths and adjurations. Presently Prelati wrapped the corpse in linen, and under cover of darkness buried it in a cemetery nearby. The blood was preserved in phials and with it, on virgin vellum, were written a grimoire and the liturgy of Satan.

'It is needless to reiterate these hideous scenes of sadism and sacrilege; to describe the Black Masses which were celebrated in the castle; to enumerate the rapes, tortures and murders. From 1432 to 1440 the orgy continued, and children disappeared from all directions into the monster's den. Their bodies were burned or thrown into the vaults and latrines of the castle. Night after night de Rais gloated fondly over anguish and death, for, as he himself said: *"J'etais plus content de jouir des tortures, des larmes, de l'effroi et du sang que de tout autre plaisir."* But his sleep was troubled with fearful dreams.

'Jean de Malestroit, Bishop of Nantes, a prelate of the highest probity and sincerest piety, at length heard rumours of these foul businesses. A month sufficed to make enquiries: a band of armed men marched against Tiffanges, whilst a second expedition invaded Machecoul whither Gilles de Rais had fled in deadly fear. Resistance was useless;

escape impossible; on the 14th September the wretched murderer, Prelati, and those of his followers who had now abandoned him on the first sign of danger, were arrested, loaded with chains and cast into prison. The ecclesiastical proceedings lasted a month and eight days; the civil proceedings forty-eight hours. Bishop Jean de Malestroit himself presided over the court, with the Bishop of Mans, Saint-Brieux and Saint-Tô as his assessors. Prince de l'Hospital, Chancellor of Britanny, watched the case for the lay authorities. But perhaps the most pregnant figure was he who sat by the side of the president; a simple friar in the black and white habit of St. Dominic, Jean Blonyn, delegate of the Holy Inquisition for the city and diocese of Nantes.

'The Promotor, Guillaume Chapeiron, a learned jurist, rector of St. Nicolas at Nantes, read an appalling list of crimes. Gilles de Rais was accused of the violation and murder of children, of witchcraft and Satanism which involved blackest heresy, and the prosecution demanded his instant excommunication as an evoker of demons, a sodomite and apostate, a heretic relapsed. The prisoner replied to these charges with blasphemy and foul railings. He refused to offer any defence. Then the Bishop of Nantes and the Inquisitor declared him contumacious, and solemnly cast him out of the bosom of mercy of Mother Church.

'On the third day the scene was changed. Gilles was now entirely broken in spirit; he hardly seemed the same man as the haughty noble who, with sullen front had hurled defiance at the judges; bent, bowed, wrinkled, trembling and fearful, his

fevered eyes blazing in his ashen face, he had veritably aged twenty years. When adjured to make full and ample confession, with downcast glances and clasped hands that shook as with palsy, in the midst of that crowded court he began the horrid chronicle of his deeds. And as the dark tale poured forth in his dull, monotonous voice, emotionless and dead, the hush grew more and more intense, whilst cheeks blanched with terror, and even the billsmen, sturdy soldiers, steeped in rapine and war, would fain have stopped their ears to shut out the chronicle of hell. Without faltering, without pause, he told the details of his murders, his rapes of tender youths who sobbed and struggled madly with fear and shame; he gloated upon the ease with which the sharp knife sank into their white throats, his orgasm as the red streams gushed out, warm and slab. He shook his long, lean fingers as if scattering the drops in some horrible asperges of crime. He spared no horror of his sadism, unmasking his bestial appetites which reverenced not even the dead. . . .'

Here you have a really appalling picture of lust and bestiality, and hideous, horrible perversion, but there is nothing to show that anything supernatural had occurred. Gilles de Rais had tried to evoke the Devil but had the Devil appeared? Had anything taken place which could not be accounted for by natural means? One might say that the Devil had taken possession of Gilles de Rais with possibly some truth, but the Devil had not been conjured up by means of witchcraft into a tangible shape. Neither had he, apparently, endowed Gilles de Rais with any magical powers despite the com-

pact, and the Black Masses, and the sacrifices. Much the same thing happened with the covens. The witches and sorcerers practised witchcraft and magic assiduously; may, possibly, have thoroughly believed in it; but in all the voluminous accounts there cannot be found any indisputable evidence that they were successful.

SECTION FIVE

WITCH TRIALS

(The following detailed account of the trials of alleged witches held at Salem, New England, in the year 1692, are taken from *The Wonders of the Invisible World,* by COTTON MATHER.)

THE TRYAL OF BRIDGET BISHOP, ALIAS OLIVER, AT THE COURT OF OYER AND TERMINER, HELD AT SALEM, JUNE 2, 1692.

I. She was indicted for Bewitching of Several Persons in the neighbourhood, the Indictment being drawn up, according to the *Form* in such Cases usual. And pleading, *Not Guilty,* there were brought in several persons, who had long undergone many kinds of Miseries, which were preternaturally inflicted, and generally ascribed unto an *horrible witchcraft.* There was little occasion to prove the *witchcraft,* it being evident and notorious to all beholders. Now to fix the *witchcraft* on the Prisoner at the Bar, the first thing used was the Testimony of the *Bewitched;* whereof several testi-

fi'd, that the *Shape* of the Prisoner did oftentimes very grievously Pinch them, Choak them, Bite them, and Afflict them; urging them to write their names in a *Book,* which the said Spectre called, *ours.* One of them did further testifie, that it was the *Shape* of this Prisoner, with another, which one day took her from her Wheel, and carrying her to the Riverside, threatened there to Drown her, if she did not sign to the *Book* mentioned: which yet she refused. Others of them did also testifie, that the said *Shape* did in her Threats brag to them that she had been the Death of sundry Persons, then by her named; that she had *Ridden* a man then likewise named. Another testifi'd, the apparition of *Ghosts* unto the Spectre of *Bishop,* crying out, *You murdered us!* About the Truth whereof, there was in the Matter of Fact but too much suspicion.

II. It was testifi'd, that at the Examination of the Prisoner before the Magistrates, the Bewitched were extremely tortured. If she did but cast her Eyes on them, they were presently struck down; and this in such a manner as there could be no Collusion in the business. But upon the Touch of her Hand upon them, when they lay in their Swoons, they would immediately Revive; and not upon the Touch of any one's else. Moreover, upon some Special Actions of her Body, as the shaking of her Head, or the turning of her Eyes, they presently and painfully fell into the like postures. And many of the like Accidents now fell out, while she was at the Bar. One at the same time testifying, that she said, *She could not be troubled to see the afflicted thus tormented.*

III. There was testimony likewise brought in, that a Man striking once at the place, where a bewitched person said, the *Shape* of this *Bishop* stood, the bewitched cried out, *That he had tore her Coat,* in the place then particularly specifi'd; and the Woman's Coat was found to be Torn in that very place.

IV. One, *Deliverance Hobbs,* who had confessed her being a Witch, was now tormented by the Spectre, for her Confession. And she now testifi'd, That this *Bishop* tempted her to sign the *Book* again, and to doing that she had confess'd. She affirm'd, That it was the Shape of the Prisoner, which whipped her with Iron Rods, to compel her thereunto. And she affirm'd, That this *Bishop* was at a General Meeting of the Witches, in a Field at *Salem*-Village, and there partook of a Diabolical Sacrament in Bread and Wine then administered.

V. To render it further unquestionable, that the Prisoner at the Bar, was the Person truly charged in THIS *witchcraft,* there were produced many Evidences of OTHER *witchcrafts* by her perpetrated. For instance, *John Cook* testifi'd, That about five or six Years ago, one Morning, about Sun Rise, he was in his Chamber assaulted by the *Shape* of this Prisoner: which look'd on him, grinn'd at him, and very much hurt him with a Blow on the side of the Head: and that on the same day, about Noon, the same *Shape* walked in the Room where he was, and an Apple strangely flew out of his Hand, into the Lap of his Mother, six or eight Foot from him.

VI. *Samuel Gray* testifi'd, That about fourteen Years ago, he wak'd on a Night, and saw the Room

where he lay full of Light; and that he then saw plainly a Woman between the Cradle and the Bedside, which look'd upon him. He rose, and it vanished; tho' he found the Doors all fast. Looking out at the entry-door he saw the same woman, in the same Garb again; and said, *In God's Name, what do you come for?* He went to Bed, and had the same Woman again assaulting him. The Child in the Cradle gave a great Screech, and the woman disappeared. It was long before the Child could be quieted; and tho' it were a very likely thriving Child, yet from this time it pined away, and after divers Months, died in a Sad Condition. He knew not *Bishop,* nor her Name; but when he saw her after this, he knew by her Countenance, and Apparel, and all Circumstances, that it was the Apparition of this *Bishop,* which had thus troubled him.

VII. *John Bly* and his wife testifi'd, That he bought a Sow of *Edward Bishop,* the Husband of the Prisoner; and was to pay the Price agreed, unto another person. This Prisoner being angry that she was thus hindred from fingring the Mony, quarrell'd with *Bly.* Soon after which, the Sow was taken with strange Fits: Jumping, Leaping, and Knocking her Head against the Fence; she seem'd Blind and Deaf, and would neither Eat nor be Suck'd. Whereupon a Neighbour said, she believed the Creature was *over-looked* and sundry other Circumstances concurred, which made the Deponents believe that *Bishop* had bewitched it.

VIII. *Richard Coman* testifi'd, that eight Years ago, as he lay awake in his Bed, with a Light burning in the Room, he was annoyed with the Appari-

tion of this *Bishop,* and of two more that were strangers to him, who came and oppressed him so, that he could neither stir himself, nor wake anyone else, and that he was the night after, molested again in the like manner; the said *Bishop* taking him by the Throat, and pulling him almost out of Bed. His Kinsman offered for this cause to lodge with him: and that Night, as they were awake, discoursing together, this *Coman* was once more visited by the Guests which had formerly been so troublesome; his Kinsman being at the same time struck speechless, and unable to move Hand or Foot. He had laid his Sword by him, which these unhappy Spectres did strive much to wrest from him; only he held too fast for them. He then grew able to call the People of his House; but altho' they heard him, yet they had not power to speak or stir; until at last, one of the People crying out, *What's the matter?* The Spectres all vanished.

IX. *Samuel Shattock* testify'd, that in the Year 1680, this *Bridget Bishop* often came to his House upon such frivolous and foolish Errands, that they suspected she came indeed with a purpose of mischief. Presently, whereupon, his eldest Child, which was of as promising Health and Sense, as any Child of its Age, began to droop exceedingly; and the oftener that *Bishop* came to the House, the worse grew the Child. As the Child would be standing at the Door, he would be thrown and bruised against the Stones, by an invisible Hand, and in like sort knock his Face against the sides of the House, and bruise it after a miserable manner. Afterwards this *Bishop* would bring him things to Dye, whereof he could not imagine any use; and

when she paid him a piece of Mony, the Purse and Mony were unaccountably conveyed out of a lock'd Box, and never seen any more. The Child was immediately, hereupon, taken with terrible Fits, whereof his Friends thought he would have dyed: Indeed he did almost nothing but Cry and Sleep for several months together; and at length his Understanding was utterly taken away. Among other Symptoms of an Inchantment upon him, one was that there was a Board in the Garden, whereupon he would walk, and all the Invitations of the world could never fetch him off. About 17 or 18 years after, there came a Stranger to *Shattock's* House, who seeing the Child, said, *This poor Child is Bewitched; and you have a Neighbour living not far off, who is a Witch.* He added, *Your Neighbour has had a falling out with your Wife; and she said, in her heart, your Wife is a proud Woman, and she would bring down her Pride in this Child.* He then remembered, that *Bishop* had parted from his wife in muttering and menacing Terms, a little before the Child was taken ill. The above said Stranger would needs carry the bewitched Boy with him, to *Bishop's* House, on pretence of buying a pot of Cyder. The Woman entertained him in furious manner; and flew also upon the Boy, scratching his Face till the Blood came: and saying, *Thou Rogue, what dost thou bring this Fellow here to plague me?* Now it seems the man had said, before he went, that he would fetch Blood of *her.* Ever after the Boy was follow'd with grievous Fits, which the Doctors themselves generally ascribed unto *Witchcraft;* and wherein he would be thrown still into the *Fire* or the *Water,* if he were not constantly

look'd after; and it was verily believed that *Bishop* was the cause of it.

X. *John Londer* testify'd, that upon some little Controversy with *Bishop* about her Fowls, going well to Bed, he did awake in the Night by Moonlight, and did see clearly the likeness of this Woman grievously oppressing him; in which miserable condition she held him, unable to help himself, until near Day. He told *Bishop* of this; but she deny'd it, and threatened him very much. Quickly after this, being at home on a Lord's day, with the doors shut about him, he saw a black Pig approach him; at which, he going to kick, it vanished away. Immediately after, sitting down, he saw a black Thing jump in at the window, and come and stand before him. The Body was like of a Monkey, the Feet like a Cock's, but the Face most like a man's. He being so extremely affrighted, that he could not speak; this Monster spoke to him, and said, *I am a messenger sent unto you, for I understand that you are in some Trouble of Mind, and if you will be ruled by me, you will want for nothing in this world.* Whereupon he endeavoured to clap his hands upon it; but he could feel no substance; and it jumped out of the Window again; but immediately came in by the Porch, tho' the Doors were shut, and said, *You had better take my Counsel!* He then struck at it with a stick, but struck only the Ground-sel, and broke the stick: the Arm with which he struck was presently disenabled, and it vanished away. He presently went out at the Back-door, and spied this *Bishop*, in her Orchard, going towards her House; but he had not power to set one foot forward unto her.

Whereupon, returning into the House, he was immediately accosted by the Monster he had seen before; which Goblin was now going to fly at him; whereat he cry'd out, *The Whole armour of God be between me and you!* So it sprang back, and flew over the Apple-tree, shaking many Apples off the Tree, in its flying over. At its leap, it flung Dirt with its feet against the Stomach of the Man; whereupon he was then struck Dumb, and so continued for three days together. Upon the producing of this Testimony, *Bishop* deny'd that she knew this Deponent: Yet their two Orchards joined; and they had often had their little Quarrels for some years together.

XI. *William Stacy* testify'd, that receiving Mony of this *Bishop,* for work done by him; he was gone but a matter of three Rods from her, and looking for his Mony, found it unaccountably gone from him. Some time after, *Bishop* asked him, whether his Father would grind her Grist for her? He demanded why? She reply'd, *Because Folks count me a Witch.* He answered, *'No question but he will grind it for you.'* Being then gone about six Rods from her, with a small Load in his Cart, suddenly the off-wheel stump'd and sunk into an hole, upon plain Ground; so that the Deponent was forced to get help for the recovering of the Wheel: But stepping back to look for the hole, which might give him this Disaster, there was none at all to be found. Some time after, he waked in the Night; but it seem'd as light as day; and he perfectly saw the Shape of this *Bishop* in the Room troubling of him; but upon her going out all was dark again. He charg'd *Bishop* afterwards with it, and she

deny'd it not; but was very angry. Quickly after this, Deponent having been threatened by *Bishop,* as he was in a dark Night going to the Barn, he was very suddenly taken or lifted from the Ground, and thrown against a Stone-wall; After that, he was again Hoisted up and thrown down a Bank, at the end of his House. After this again, passing by this *Bishop,* his Horse with a small Load, striving to draw, all his Gears flew to pieces, and the Cart fell down; and this Deponent going then to lift a Bag of Corn, of about two Bushels, could not budge it with all his Might.

Many other Pranks of this *Bishop's* this Deponent was ready to testify. He also testify'd, that he verily believed the said *Bishop* was the Instrument of his Daughter, *Priscilla's* Death; of which suspicion, Pregnant Reasons were assigned.

XII. To crown all, *John Bly* and *William Bly* testify'd, that being employ'd by *Bridget Bishop,* to help to take down the Cellar-wall of the old house wherein she formerly lived, they did in holes of the said Wall, find several *Poppets,* made of Rags and Hogs-bristles, with headless Pins in them, the Points being outward; whereof she could give no account unto the Court, that was reasonable or tolerable.

XIII. One thing that made against the Prisoner was, her being evidently convicted of *gross Lying* in the Court, several times, while she was making her plea; but besides this, a Jury of Women found a preternatural Teat upon her Body; But upon a second search, within three or four hours, there was no such thing to be seen. There was also an Account of other People whom this Woman had

Afflicted; and there might have been many more, if they had been enquired for; but there was no need of them.

XIV. There was one very strange thing more, with which the Court was newly entertained. As this Woman was under a Guard, passing by the great and spacious Meeting-house of *Salem,* She gave a look towards the House: and immediately a Daemon invisibly entring the Meeting-house, tore down a part of it; so that tho' there was no Person to be seen there, yet the People, at the noise, running in, found a Board, which was strongly fastened with several Nails, transported into another quarter of the House.

Bridget Bishop was found Guilty of Witchcraft and hanged on June 10, 1692.

THE TRYAL OF G.B.* AT A COURT OF OYER AND TERMINER

HELD IN SALEM, 1692

Glad should I have been, if I had never known the Name of this Man: or never had this occasion to mention so much as the first Letters of his Name. But the Government requiring some Account of his Tryal to be inserted in this Book, it becomes me with all Obedience to submit unto the Order.

I. This G.B. was Indicted for Witchcraft, and in the prosecution of the Charge against him, he was accused by five or six of the Bewitched, as the Author of their Miseries; he was accused by Eight

*The Rev. George Burroughs.

of the Confessing Witches, as being an head Actor at some of their Hellish Randezvouzes, and one who had the promise of being a King in Satan's Kingdom, now going to be Erected: He was accused by Nine Persons for extraordinary Lifting, and such feats of Strength as could not be done without a Diabolical Assistance. And for other such things he was Accused, until about thirty Testimonies were brought in against him; nor were these judg'd the half of what might have been considered for his Conviction: However they were enough to fix the character of a Witch upon him according to the Rules of Reasoning, by the Judicious *Gaule* in that Case directed.

II. The Court being sensible that the Testimonies of the Parties Bewitched, use to have a Room among the *Suspicions* or *Presumptions,* brought in against one Indicted for Witchcraft; there were now heard the Testimonies of several Persons, who were most notoriously Bewitched, and every day Tortured by Invisible Hands, and these now all charged the Spectres of G.B. to have a share in their Torments. At the examination of this G.B. the Bewitched People were grievously harassed with Preternatural Mischiefs, which could not possibly be Dissembled; and they still ascribe it unto the endeavours of G.B. to kill them. And now upon the Tryal of one of the Bewitched Persons, testify'd, that in her agonies, a little black hair'd man, came to her saying his name was B. and bidding her set her hand to a Book which he showed unto her; and bragging that he was a *Conjuror,* above the ordinary Rank of Witches; That he often persecuted her with the offer of that Book,

saying *she should be well and need fear nobody, if she would but Sign it;* But he inflicted cruel Pains and Hurts upon her, because of her denying so to do. The Testimonies of the other Sufferers concurred with these; and it was remarkable, that whereas *Biting* was one of the ways which the Witches used for the vexing of the Sufferers; when they cry'd out of G.B. Biting them, the print of the Teeth would be seen on the flesh of the Complainors, and just such a Set of Teeth as G.B.'s would then appear upon them, which could be distinguished from those of some other Men's. Others of them testified, That in their Torments, G.B. tempted them to go into a Sacrament, unto which they perceived him with a sound of Trumpets, Summoning of other Witches, who quickly after the Sound, would come from all Quarters unto the Randezvous. One of them falling into a kind of Trance, affirmed that G.B. had carried her away into a very high mountain, where he showed her mighty and glorious Kingdoms, and said, *He would give them all to her if she would write in his Book;* But she told him, *They were none of his to give;* and refused the Motions, enduring of much misery for that refusal.

It cost the Court a wonderful deal of Trouble, to hear the Testimonies of the Sufferers; for when they were going to give in their Depositions, they would for a long time be taken with Fits, that made them incapable of saying anything. The chief Judge asked the Prisoner, who he thought hindered these witnesses from giving their *Testimonies?* And he answer, *He supposed it was the Devil.* That Honourable Person replied, *How comes the*

Devil then to be so loath to have any Testimonies borne against you? Which cast him into very great confusion.

III. It has been a frequent thing for the Bewitched People to be entertained with Apparitions of *Ghosts* of Murdered People, at the same time that the Spectres of the Witches trouble them. These Ghost do always affright the Beholders more than all the other spectral Representations; and when they exhibit themselves, they cry out, of being murthered by the Witchcrafts or other Violences of the Persons who are then in Spectre present. It is further considered, that once or twice, these *Apparitions* have been seen by others, at the very same time they have shown themselves to the Bewitched; and seldom have there been these *Apparitions,* but when something unusual or suspected, have attended the Death of the Party thus Appearing. Some that have been accused by these *Apparitions* accosting of the Bewitched People, who had never heard a word of any such Persons ever being in the world, have upon a fair examination, freely and fully confessed the Murthers of those very Persons, altho' these also did not know how the Apparitions had complained of them. Accordingly several of the Bewitched, had given in their Testimony, that they had been troubled with the Apparitions of two Women, who said, that they were G.B.'s two Wives, and that he had been the Death of them; and that the Magistrates must be told of it, before whom if B. upon his Tryal deny'd it, they did not know but that they should appear again in Court. Now, G.B. had been infamous for the Barbarous usage of his two late Wives, all the

country over. Moreover, it was testifi'd, the Spectre of G.B. threatening of the Sufferers, told them, he had killed (besides others) Mrs. *Lawson* and her Daughter *Ann*. And it was noticed that these were the Virtuous Wife and Daughter of one at whom this G.B. might have a prejudice for his being servicable at *Salem Village,* from whence himself had in ill Terms removed some years before: And that when they dy'd, which was long since, there were some odd Circumstances about them, which made some of the Attendants there suspect something of Witchcraft tho' none imagined from what Quarter it should come.

Well, G.B. being now upon his Tryal, one of the Bewitched Persons, was cast into Horror at the Ghost of B.'s two Deceased Wives then appearing before him, and crying for Vengeance against him. Hereupon several of the Bewitched Persons were successively called in, who all not knowing what the former had seen and said, concurred in their Horror of the Apparitions, which they affirmed that he had before him. But he, tho much appalled, utterly deny'd that he discerned any thing of it, nor was it any part of his *Conviction.*

IV. Judicious writers have assigned it a great place in the Conviction of *Witches, when Persons are Impeached by other notorious Witches, to be as ill* as themselves. especially, if the Persons have been *much noticed for neglecting the Worship of God.* Now, there might have been Testimonies enough of G.B.'s Antipathy to *Prayers,* and other Ordinances of God, tho by his Profession, singularly Obliged thereunto; so, there now came in against the Prisoner, the Testimonies of several

Persons, who confessed their own having been horrible *Witches,* and ever since their Confessions, have been themselves terribly Tortured by the Devils and other Witches, even like the other sufferers; and therein undergone the Pains of many Deaths for their Confessions.

These now testifi'd, that G.B. had been at Witch-Meetings with them; and that he was the Person who had Seduc'd and Compell'd them into the snares of Witch-craft: that he promised them *Fine Cloathes* for doing it; That he brought Poppets to them, and thorns to stick into those Poppets, for the Afflicting of other People; and that he exhorted them with the rest of the Crew, to Bewitch all *Salem Village,* but to be sure to do it Gradually, if they would prevail in what they did.

When the *Lancashire Witches* were Condemn'd, I don't remember that there was any considerable further evidence, than that of the Bewitched, and than that of some that confessed. We see so much already against G.B. But this being indeed not enough, there were other things to render what had been already produced *Credible.*

V. A famous Divine recites this among the Convictions of a Witch: *The Testimony of the party Bewitched, whether Pining or Dying; together with the joint oaths of sufficient Persons that have seen certain Prodigious Pranks or Feats wrought by the Party Accused.* Now, God had been pleased so to leave this G.B. that he had ensnared himself by several Instances, which he had formerly given of a Preternatural Strength, and which were now produced against him. He was a very Puny man, yet he had often done things Beyond the strength of a

Giant. A Gun of about seven foot Barrel, and so heavy that strong Men could not steadily hold it out with both hands; there were several Testimonies given in by Persons of Credit and Honor that he made nothing of taking up such a Gun behind the Lock, with one hand, and holding it out like a Pistol, at Arms-end. G.B. in his Vindication, was so foolish as to say, That *an Indian was there, and held it out at the same time,* Whereas none of the Spectators ever saw any such *Indian;* but they supposed, the *Black Man* (as the Witches called the Devil; and they generally say he resembles an *Indian*) might give him that Assistance. There was Evidence likewise brought in, that he made nothing of taking up whole Barrels fill'd with *Molasses* or *Cider,* in very Disadvantageous Postures, and Carrying of them through the difficult Places out of a Canoo to the Shore.

Yea, there were two Testimonies, that G.B. with only putting the Fore Finger of his Right Hand into the Muzzle of an heavy Gun, a Fowling-piece of about six or seven foot Barrel, did lift up the Gun, and hold it out at arms-end; a Gun which the Deponents, though strong Men, could not with both hands lift up, and hold out at the But-end as is usual. Indeed, one of these witnesses was overperswaded by some Persons, to be out of the way upon G.B.'s Tryal; but he came afterwards with Sorrow for his withdraw, and gave his Testimony: nor were either of these witnesses made use of as Evidence in the Tryal.

VI. Then came in several Testimonies relating to the Domestick Affairs of G.B. which had a very hard Aspect upon him; and not only prov'd him a

very ill man; but also confirmed the belief of the Character, which had been already fastened on him.

'Twas testified, that keeping his two Successive Wives in a strange kind of Slavery, he would when he came home from abroad, pretend to tell the Talk which any had with them; That he has brought them to the point of Death, by his harsh Dealings with his Wives, and then made the People about him, to promise that in case Death should happen, they would say nothing of it: that he used all means to make his Wives Write, Sign, Seal and Swear a Command, never to reveal any of his Secrets: That his Wives had privately complained unto the Neighbours about frightful Apparitions of Evil Spirits, with which their House was sometimes infested; and that many such things have been whispered among the Neighbourhood. There were also some other Testimonies relating to the Death of People whereby the Consciences of an Impartial Jury were convinced that G.B. had Bewitched the Persons mentioned in the Complaints. But I am forced to omit several passages, in this, as well as in all the succeeding Tryals, because the Scribes who took notice of them, have not supplyed me.

VII. One Mr. *Ruck,* Brother-in-Law to this G.B., testified, that G.B. and himself, and his Sister, who was G.B.'s wife, going out for two or three Miles, to gather Strawberries, *Ruck* with his sister, the wife of G.B. Rode home very softly, with G.B. on Foot in their company, G.B. stept aside a little into the Bushes; whereupon they halted and Halloo'd for him. He not answering, they went away home-

wards, with quickened pace, without expectation of seeing him in a considerable while; and yet when they were got near home, to their Astonishment, they found him on foot with them, having a Basket of Strawberries. G.B. immediately then fell to Chiding his wife, on the account of what she had been speaking to her Brother of him, on the Road: which when they wondered at, he said, *He knew their thoughts. Ruck* being startled at this, made some reply, intimating that the Devil himself did not know so far; but G.B. answered, *My God makes known your Thoughts unto me.*

The Prisoner now at the Bar had nothing to answer, unto what was thus witnessed against him, that was worth considering. Only he said, *Ruck and his Wife left a Man with him when they left him.* Which *Ruck* now affirm'd to be false; and when the Court asked G.B. *What the Man's Name was?* his Countenance was much altered; nor could he say, who 'twas. But the Court began to think, that he then step'd aside, only that by the assistance of the *Black Man,* he might put on his *Invisibility,* and in that *Fascinating Mist,* gratifie his own Jealous Humour, to hear what they said of him. Which trick of rendering themselves *Invisible,* our Witches do in their Confessions pretend, that they sometimes are Masters of; and it is the more credible, because there is Demonstration, that they often render many other things utterly *Invisible.*

VIII. *Faltering, faulty, unconstant, and contrary Answers upon judicial and deliberate Examinations,* are counted some unlucky symptoms of Guilt, in all crimes, especially in witchcrafts. Now there never was a Prisoner more eminent for them,

than G.B. both at his Examination and on his Tryal. His *Tergiversations, Contradictions,* and *Falsehoods* were very sensible: he had either to say, but that he had heard some things that he could not prove, Reflecting upon the Reputations of some of the Witnesses. Only he gave in a Paper to the Jury; wherein, altho' he had many times before, granted, not only that there are *witches,* but also, the present Sufferings of the country are the effects of *horrible Witchcrafts,* yet he now goes to evince it, *That there neither are nor ever were Witches, that having made a Compact with the Devil, can send a Devil to Torment other people at a distance.* This Paper was Transcribed out of *Ady*: which the Court presently knew, as soon as they heard it. But he said, he had taken none of it out of any Book; for which his Evasion afterwards, was, That a gentleman gave him the Discourse in a Manuscript, from whence he Transcribed it.

IX. The Jury brought him in *Guilty*: But when he came to Die, he utterly deni'd the Facts whereof he had been thus convicted.

On August 19th, George Burroughs was executed at Witch-hill, and with him were executed four others, John Procter, George Jacobs, John Willard and Martha Carrier.

II

SATANISM

SECTION TWO
SATANISM
I
THE BLACK MASS

'The other shape,
If shape it might be called, that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,
Or substance might be called that shadow seemed,
For each seemed either; black it stood as night,
Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,
And shook a dreadful dart; what seemed his head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on.'

Milton: Paradise Lost.

'Satan was now at hand. . . .'

Ibid.

SECTION TWO
SATANISM
I
THE BLACK MASS

(Extracts from Doctor Montague Summers's book)

ON THE 19TH FEBRUARY, 1611, a commission was issued to one de Seguiran, a councillor, to arrest

Louis Ganfridi, a priest, and the vicar of Accoules, Marseilles, accused of rape, seduction, magic, sorcery, blasphemy and other heinous and abominable offences.

Madeleine de la Palud was interrogated during three days, 21st, 22nd, 23rd February, by President Thoron, when she made a complete confession concerning witchcraft of every kind, especially the Sabbat, at which she had frequently assisted. There she had worshipped the Prince of the Synagogue (for so the coven was called), a man, Lucifer's lieutenant, in effect. Ganfridi himself. All present renounced the Holy Trinity, their baptism, and the Catholic Faith. A banquet was spread on several tables, some of which were piled with goodly viands and wine; upon others was served the roasted flesh of newly-slain infants. Lewd dances were performed and bawdy songs sung. Each day of the week had its own sexual observances, proceeding to the most infamous conjunctions. The Black Mass in honour of Satan was celebrated, sometimes by Ganfridi, sometimes by some other wretch, the Host being often thrown to a dog, and the Sacred Blood being scattered over the vile crew, who shouted: '*Sanguis eius super nos et super filios nostros.*' Upon one occasion a dog, who had been led in to devour the consecrated species, stretched out his paws in adoration of God's Body and bowed his head, nor could kicks and blows compel him to stir. Several broke in floods of tears and began to bewail their sins, after which it was decided that in future the Host should be defiled and trodden under foot, but that no dogs should be admitted. There seems no reason to

doubt that this confession is substantially true, and that these foul rites had been for several years practised by a gang of infamous witches under conditions of all but inviolable secrecy.

Ganfridi, who was thrown into prison on the 20th February, 1611, made a complete avowal of his iniquities, his sorceries and seductions of religious. It is true that he was tortured according to the usage of the day, but none the less his story seems to be proven in every particular, and not merely wrung from him by the torment of the question.

On 30th April, Ganfridi was publicly degraded from all ecclesiastical orders by Monsignor Tussicella, Bishop of Marseilles, and delivered over to secular justice. About five o'clock in the afternoon he was burned at the stake before an immense concourse of people.

Madeleine de la Palud and Louise Capel were both expelled from the convent by the Ursulines. Of the latter nothing more is known, but the principal actress in those scandals was reduced to penury and was seen to beg her bread in the streets. In after years she apparently inherited her father's estates, for she bestowed de la Palud upon the discalced Trinitarians as a suitable site for a church and monastery.

There was an extraordinary sequel to the scandals and sorceries of Aix when some two years later three Bridgeittines of the convent of St. Bridget of Sweden and Lille, Sisters Françoise Bolonnais, Catherine Fournier and Imbert, declared themselves to be possessed. They fell into violent paroxysms, vomited strange substances, spoke in divers tongues normally unknown to them,

Hebrew, Greek, English, Spanish, and, in short, gave every sign of Satanic disease. In their confessions they accused a nun, Marie de Sains, who, until then had been accounted a saint far advanced on the mystic way, of having cast an evil spell upon them. When interrogated she denied any such complicity with demons, but none the less she was put under cloistered restraint and closely watched. Presently Father Sebastian Michaelis and Father Domptius, the two Dominican exorcists, arrived at Lille, and proceeded to examine closely into the affair. Marie de Sains was closely questioned by these experts, and before long she made the most astounding confessions. She swore that she had dedicated herself body and soul, her will, every wish and movement to the powers of hell. She had confected charms to cause sickness and delirium, and these she had secretly fastened to the habits of the nuns, in the straw of their pallets, in some corner of their cells. It was these which caused the possession of the three sisters, as well as the diabolic attacks on Sister Vandermoste, Sister Lannoy and Sister Peronne, who were now on the verge of madness. The formula for these amulets of evil power had been invented by none other than Louis Ganfridi, who had taught her how to fashion them at the Sabbat. They were composed of the Sacred Host and the Precious Blood, commingled into a paste with a powder made from human and animal bones, the skulls of infants, hair, nails, flesh, the liver, brain and spleen of an executed murderer, and the semen of a sorcerer. She further avowed that she had slain a number of young children, many of whom she had cut open alive to offer their

agonized and writhing limbs as a sacrifice to the Devil. Some she had suffocated; others she had put to death in exquisite torments. Several she had crucified in memory of the Cross of Calvary. She added the most obscene details concerning the debauchery of the Sabbat, where she had abandoned herself to every species of lewdness, defiling her body with the demons, with goats and dogs. What is even more surprising, she uttered long dissertations upon the coming of the Anti-Christ and expounded the more obscure prophesies of the Apocalypse. The Man of Sin was the offspring of a witch and a demon, he was baptized by Ganfridi, and ere long would be manifested upon the earth. In hideous mimicry of the mission of St. John the Baptist, he also would be distinguished by a precursor, the son of Ganfridi and Madeleine de la Palud. The wretched woman was discovered to be pregnant, and she acknowledged that she had already given birth to two children, the father of the first being a warlock who had deflowered her during the orgies of the Sabbat, the father of the second, Ganfridi.

Another sister, named Didymi, and a novice, Simonne Dourlet, were intimately concerned in these abominations. Frantic and extravagant as much of the confession of Marie de Sains was; in some details, humanly speaking, impossible; it was established that beyond all doubt a very substantial amount of fact underlay her ravings. She had for many years managed to creep out of the convent secretly at night, helped by her accomplices and sometimes accompanied by them. She was wont to resort to a den of Satanists, where the lurid scenes

she rehearsed in such detail were actually transacted. Her brain was obviously unsettled by her debaucheries, but even at this distance of time it is possible to disentangle to some extent the false from the true in her story. We know that the witches had a very ample knowledge of toxicants and drugs, and a secretly administered potion would account for the sickness and distractions of the sisters, whom she probably feared and hated as having some suspicion, or even knowledge, of her clandestine excursions.

The Bishop of Mechlin, who caused the case to be examined by a conclave of divines, physicians and lawyers, declared that such blasphemies and depravity were incredible indeed, but yet he was convinced that much of her confession was only too terribly true. Marie de Sains was condemned by the ecclesiastical court to perpetual imprisonment in the dungeons of Tournai.

Throughout the whole history of witchcraft there is no history so infamous as that of Madeleine Bavent, Mathurin Picard and Thomas Boullé. Nowhere have I read so hideous a confession. The details are so utterly abominable that even the soul of a priest, steeped in the fires of the confessional, whom no human aberration can shock or surprise, shudders and sickens at the dark mass of turpitudes which are as the stench and vomit of the pit of hell.

In 1616, at Louviers, a busy little old-world town of Normandy, situate on the river Eure, some seven-and-twenty miles from Rouen, was founded the convent of St. Louis IX and St. Elizabeth of Hungary, for a community of Regular Tertiaries of the Third Franciscan Order. Their first direc-

tor was an old priest named David, shortly to be succeeded by Mathurin Picard, the vicar of Mesnie-Jourdain, whose curate, Thomas Boullé, assisted him, and upon his death in 1642 was installed with full responsibility in his room. By some unhappy fate—it was more than mere chance without design—all three were adherents of the Manichees, concealing their Satanism under a guise of orthodox sanctity. From the commencement they set to work to corrupt the hapless religious whose faithful pastors and guardians they should have been, and instead of lifting their souls to heaven they dropped them down to the nethermost inferno. As early as 1634 there were indications that something was seriously amiss. Two or three Sisters were seized with fits of an abnormal nature, now standing rigid in some paralytic trance, now foaming on the ground in an epilepsy and writhing as some boneless contortionist of the circus arena. Matters, however, seem to have been hushed up for a while, although the infamous Picard ran some danger of being exposed. He was, in truth, the Chief Officer and Grand-Master of all the witches and devil-worshippers throughout the district. Having seduced and entirely subjugated to his will an unfortunate nun, Madeleine Bavent, he used her as his instrument, his assistant and intermediary. There can be no doubt, I think, that Picard must have possessed extraordinary hypnotic powers, and Madeleine Bavent is probably not to be accounted morally responsible for the orgy of crime into which she was plunged. The details are known from the confession which she wrote in prison at the instance of the Abbe de Marets, an

Oratorian, who helped and counselled her in those hours of penitence and remorse. Several nights a week she was awakened just before Matins, that is to say, about midnight, by one of the nuns, and conducted to the Sabbat. It is clear that Picard had provided himself with false keys so that he could gain admission to any part of the cloister at any hour. She declared that she never used any ointment or recited any spell, but that she was conveyed to the Sabbat by the power of Picard without knowing how she arrived there, obviously in a state of trance. The exact place where the Sabbat took place she could not identify, but it was evidently in some house not far from the convent. It was a long and narrow room, lighted by flares and the candles upon the Devil's altar which had been erected there. This certainly suggests a cellar. A number of persons dressed as priests were present, and some in grotesque masking habits, half-animal, half-human. She never assisted at any adoration of the demon in the form of a he-goat, and the rites were seldom followed by a banquet. The Black Mass of Satan was continually said at the altar. The Host appeared to be of a red colour, and communion was given to the worshippers. The liturgy was read from a book of blasphemies, which was also carried in procession. It contained the most hideous maledictions against all things sacred and divine, and seems to have been on manuscript rather than a printed book. There was also a register or roll of Satanists in which her name had been inscribed by David. This was kept with the utmost care and Madeleine was never told the names of any who were present. She recognized

four religious from her own house, Catherine of the Cross, Catherine of St. Genevieve, Elizabeth of the Nativity, and Anne Barré, also Thomas Boullé and several other priests whom she knew only by sight, probably as having served the convent's chapel. Prominent among the assistants was an elderly man with iron-grey hair, who was generally simply dressed in a purple velvet suit, and a matron, said to be Mother Francis of the Cross (in the world Simonne Gaugain), a co-foundress of the Fourvier's Convent, who ordinarily resided at Paris. It is impossible to relate certain abominations and unnatural defilements of the Blessed Sacrament which these evil priests practised. The details are frankly too monstrous for reproduction. The wretched woman further related: 'On the Good Friday night of one year Picard and Boullé brought with them four Hosts; two of these they put in their own mouths, and the other two into Mother Simonne's mouth and mine; then they exchanged theirs for ours in order to cement for ever the union and connection between us. One night, after the book of blasphemies had been carried in procession, a little crucifix was brought in and large Hosts were nailed to the hands and feet of the figure of Christ, and each one present stabbed the hosts with a sharp knife. There fell two or three drops of blood, which were gathered up carefully and preserved with the Hosts to confect a charm.' 'I cannot but believe,' she cried in tones of utter despair, 'that this is a renewal of the Crucifixion of Our Lord.'

On one occasion a priest brought a Host to burn it; and another time a priest brought a chalice half-

filled with the Precious Blood, which they poured out over the floor. One Holy Saturday a woman handed over to these men-devils her newly-born child. The babe was crucified on a rough cross, its little hands and feet being fastened to the wood with nails which pierced large Hosts. Two men who had ventured to the Sabbat out of curiosity, filled with horror at the spectacle, refused to take part in the orgies of lust and murder. They were not allowed to leave the house alive. Picard used to delight to subject the miserable Madeleine to the more infamous sexual connections, to prostitute her publicly before the fiendish assembly. . . .

Catherine Deshayer, widow of Antoine Montvoisin, and commonly known as La Voisin, had long been known to the criminal and the curious as midwife, bawd, and witch. In the secret chamber of her house in the rue Beauregard she told fortunes by cards, by the grounds of coffee, by the magic crystal, just as any Bond Street seer of today. But for a heavier fee she would inspect the entrails of beasts, she would evoke the dead, and for yet more gold you might be admitted to the hideous mysteries of Satan's Eucharist.

She was assisted in this profession by numerous satellites: her lovers, Romani, a handsome young Italian boy; a lusty Norman named Lesage; a wanton hermaphrodite, exotic and perverse, la Trianon, dwelt in the house. The two executioners of Paris, M. Guillaume and M. Lasiviere, contended for La Voisin's favour, bringing her gallant presents of the limbs and fat of murderers on the gibbet or wheel, whence she made tall black tapers for her secret ceremonies. All Paris thronged to

La Voisin's doors. Thither came the Duchess de Boillon; the Duchess de Lusignan; the Duchess de Vivonne to devote herself and the babe in her womb to Satan; all the fair and utterly corrupt aristocracy of France, and above all the greatest lady in the realm, greater than the Queen, the imperial Arthenais de Montespan. . . .

The Abbé Guibourg, the illegitimate son of Henri de Montmorency, was a man of some sixty years, who is described as tall and heavy-limbed with a malign and sensual face. It was he who celebrated innumerable Satanic masses at the instance of Madame de Montespan in order to secure her supreme power and eternal fidelity on the part of the King.

A long, black velvet pall was spread over the altar, and upon this the royal mistress laid herself in a state of perfect nudity. Six black candles were lit, the celebrant robed himself in a chasuble embroidered with esoteric characters wrought in silver. The gold paten and chalice were placed upon the naked belly of the living altar, to whose warm flesh the priest pressed his lips each time the missal directed him to kiss the flesh of sacrifice, *nec extra nec intra corporale.* All was silent save for the low, monotonous murmur of the blasphemous liturgy. The Host was consecrated, and then the Precious Blood. An assistant crept forward bearing an infant in her arms. The child was held over the altar, a sharp gash across the neck, a stifled cry, and warm drops of blood fell into the chalice and streamed upon the white figure beneath. The corpse was handed to La Voisin, who flung it callously into an oven fashioned for that

purpose which glowed white-hot in its fierceness. It was revealed that a regular traffic had been carried on for years with beggar-women and the lowest prostitutes who sold their children for this purpose. At her trial La Voisin confessed that no less than two thousand five hundred babies had been disposed of in this manner, for the Black Mass was constantly being celebrated, not only by Guibourg but by other priests. Many ladies of the Court had served as an altar. . . .

Madame de Montespan was generally attended on these occasions by her confidante, Madame de la Desocillets. Guibourg celebrated these masses in this way upon the naked body of Madame de Montespan. At the first the following conjuration was used:

'Astaroth, Asmodius, princes of friendship and love, I invoke you to accept our sacrifice, this child that I offer you, for the things I ask of you. They are that the friendship and love of the King and the Dauphin may be assured to me, that I may be honoured by all the princes and princesses of the Court, that the King deny me nothing that I ask, whether it be for my relatives or for any of my household.'

Not the least sad circumstance that came to light during the investigation of these orgies of witchcraft was the large number of priests implicated. Among them they included: Abbé Dulong, a canon of Notre Dame; Abbé Olivier, who consecrated an altar in a brothel; Abbé Lemeignan, curate of St. Eustache, who offered infants stolen from the cradle to Satan, and, above all, Guibourg himself, any one of whose mistresses, La Fleurette,

La Chauprein and La Jeanneton, the hangman's niece, would always serve him as an altar for his foul rites.

A certain Jean Baptiste Sébault, of the diocese of Bourges, who was lodging in Paris at the house of a doctor, named Chamillon, seduced Marianne Chamillon, his host's daughter, a girl of twenty-two, and continually brought her to the Black Mass. The Abbé Guibourg celebrated a Satanic Mass in a cellar, and was served by Sébault in a state of complete nudity. An aphrodisiac was brewed at this orgy.

The scandals when this whole horrible affair came to light were terrific. More than two hundred and forty-six persons were deeply implicated in these abominations, and many of those who had taken part were among the noblest names of France.

La Voisin was condemned to death and burned at the stake on the 22nd February, 1680. Several persons died in prison; others again committed suicide in agonies of shame at the thought of a trial. The Abbé Guibourg was imprisoned in chains for life.

Unhappily it cannot be denied that Satanism is practised in England at the present day. The Black Mass is said in London and in Brighton – and I doubt not in many other towns too – under conditions of all but absolute secrecy. The tabernacles of London churches, moreover, have been robbed of Hosts in circumstances which admit of no other explanation. I myself have been shown two ancient candlesticks of great value upon which in a secret place was inscribed in Hebrew characters the most holy name of God – but *inverted*. They had

been used at the hideous celebration of a diabolic Eucharist. Now and again some gang of devil-worshippers may be broken up and dispersed, but perhaps there are few persons who realize how far-spread and how cunningly organized are these societies of evil. To the ordinary man it is incredible, or at any rate a myth of the remote Dark Ages. He does not realize, and he is happy in his ignorance, the evil fires that burn but just a very little way beneath the thin and crumbling crust of our boasted modern civilization.

THE EARLIER SERVICE

BY MARGARET IRWIN

MRS. LACEY AND HER eldest daughter Alice hurried through the diminutive gate that led from the Rectory garden into the churchyard. Alice paused to call: 'Jane, father's gone on,' under the window of her young sister's room. To her mother she added with a cluck of annoyance, 'What a time she takes to dress!'

But Jane was sitting, ready dressed for church, in the window-seat of her room. Close up to her window and a little to the right, stood the square church tower with gargoyles at each corner. She could see them every morning as she lay in her bed at the left of the window, their monstrous necks stretched out as though they were trying to get into her room.

The church bell stopped. Jane could hear the shuffle of feet as the congregation rose at the entrance of her father; then came silence, and then the drone of the General Confession. She jumped up, ran downstairs and into the churchyard. Right above her now hung the gargoyles, peering down

at her. Behind them the sun was setting in clouds, soft and humid as winter sunsets can only be in Somerset. She was standing in front of a tiny door studded with nails. The doorway was the oldest part of the church of Cloud Martin. It dated back to Saxon days; and the shrivelled bits of blackened, leather-like stuff, still clinging to some of the nails, were said to be the skins of heathens flayed alive.

Jane paused a moment, her hands held outwards and a little behind her. Her face was paler than it had been in her room, her eyes were half shut, and her breath came a little quickly, but then she had been running. With the same sudden movement that she had jumped from the window-seat, she now jerked her hands forward, turned the great iron ring that served as a door-handle, and stole into the church.

The door opened into the corner just behind the Rectory pew. She was late. Mrs. Lacey and Alice were standing up and chanting the monotone that had become a habitual and almost an unconscious part of their lives. Jane stole in past her mother, and knelt for an instant, her red pigtail, bright symbol of an old-fashioned unbringing, flopping sideways on to the dark wood. 'Please God, don't let me be afraid – don't, don't *don't* let me be afraid,' she whispered; then stood, and repeated the responses in clear and precise tones, her eyes fixed on the long stone figure of the Crusader against the wall in front of her.

He was in chain armour; the mesh of mail surrounded his face like the coif of a nun, and a high crown-like helmet came low down on his brows. His feet rested against a small lion, which Jane as

a child had always thought was his favourite dog that had followed him to the Holy Wars. His huge mailed hand grasped the pommel of his sword, drawn an inch or two from its scabbard. Jane gazed at him as though she would draw into herself all the watchful stern repose of the sleeping giant. Behind the words of the responses, other words repeated themselves in her mind:

> The knight is dust,
> His good sword rust;
> His soul is with the saints, we trust.

'But he is *here,*' she told herself, 'you can't really be afraid with him here.'

There came the sudden silence before the hymn, and she wondered what nonsense she had been talking to herself. She knew the words of the service too well, that was what it was; how could she ever attend to them?

They settled down for the sermon, a safe twenty minutes at least, in the Rector's remote and dream-like voice. Jane's mind raced off at a tangent, almost painfully agile, yet confined always somewhere between the walls of the church.

'You shouldn't think of other things in church,' was a maxim that had been often repeated to her. In spite of it she thought of more other things in those two Sunday services than in the whole week between.

'What a lot of Other Things other people must have thought of too in this church,' she said to herself; the thought shifted and changed a little; 'there are lots of Other Things in this church; there

are too many Other Things in this church.' Oh, she *mustn't* say things like that to herself or she would begin to be afraid again – she was not afraid yet – of course, she was not afraid, there was nothing to be afraid of, and if there were, the Crusader was before her, his hand on his sword, ready to draw it at need. And what need could there be? Her mother was beside her whose profile she could see without looking at it, *she* would never be disturbed, and by nothing.

But at that moment Mrs. Lacey shivered, and glanced behind her at the little door by which Jane had entered. Jane passed her fur to her, but Mrs. Lacey shook her head. Presently she looked round again, and kept her head turned for fully a minute. Jane watched her mother until the familiar home-trimmed hat turned again to the pulpit; she wondered then if her mother would indeed never be disturbed, and by nothing.

She looked up at the crooked angel in the tiny window of medieval glass. His red halo was askew; his oblique face had been a friend since her childhood. A little flat-nosed face in the carving round the pillar grinned back at her and all but winked.

'How old are you?' asked Jane.

'Six hundred years old,' he replied.

'Then you should know better than to wink in church, let alone always grinning.'

But he only sang to a ballad tune:

'Oh, if you'd seen as much as I,
It's often you would wink.'

'And now unto God the Father God the Son and

God the Holy Ghost—'

Already! *Now* they would soon be outside again, out of the church for a whole safe week. But they would have to go through that door first.

She waited anxiously till her father went up to the altar to give the blessing. After she was confirmed, she, too, would have to go up to the altar. She would have to go. Now her father was going. He took so long to get there, he seemed so much smaller and darker as he turned his back on the congregation; it was really impossible sometimes to see that he had on a white surplice at all. What was he going to do up there at the altar, what was that gleaming pointed thing in his hand? *Who* was that little dark man going up to the altar? Her fingers closed tight on her prayer book as the figure turned round.

'You idiot, of course it's father! There, you can see it's father.'

She stared at the benevolent nut-cracker face, distinct enough now to her for all the obscurity of the chancel. How much taller he seemed now he had turned round. And of course, his surplice was white – quite white. What *had* she been seeing?

'May the peace of God which passeth all understanding—'

She wished she could kneel under the spell of those words for ever.

'Oh, yes,' said the little flat-nosed face as she rose from her knees, 'but you'd find it dull, you know.' He was grinning atrociously.

The two Rectory girls filed out after their mother, who carefully fastened the last button on her glove before she opened the door on which hung the skins

of men that had been flayed alive. As she did so, she turned round and looked behind her, but went out without stopping. Jane almost ran after her, and caught her arm. Mrs. Lacey was already taking off her gloves.

'Were you looking round for Tom Elroy, mother?' asked Alice.

'No, dear, not especially. I thought Tom or someone had come up to our door, but the church does echo so. I think there must be a draught from that door, but it's funny, I only feel it just at the end of the evening service.'

'You oughtn't to sit at the end of the pew then, and with your rheumatism. Janey, you always come in last. Why don't *you* sit at the end?'

'I won't!' snapped Jane.

'Whatever's the matter, Jane?' asked her mother.

'Why should I sit at the end of the pew? Why can't we move out of that pew altogether? I only wish we would.'

Nobody paid any attention to this final piece of blasphemy, for they had reached the lighted hall of the Rectory by this time and were rapidly dispersing. Jane hung her coat and hat on the stand in the hall and went into the pantry to collect the cold meat and cheese. The maids were always out on Sunday evening. Alice was already making toast over the dining-room fire; she looked up as the Rector entered, and remarked severely: 'You shouldn't quote Latin in your sermons, father. Nobody in the church understands it.'

'Nobody understands my sermons,' said Mr. Lacey, 'for nobody listens to them. So I may as well give myself the occasional pleasure of a Latin

quotation, since only a dutiful daughter is likely to notice the lapse of manners. Alice, my dear, did I give out in church that next Friday is the last Confirmation class?'

'Friday!' cried Jane, in the doorway with the cheese. 'Next Friday the last class? Then the Confirmation's next week.'

'Of course it is, and high time, too,' said Alice, 'seeing that you were sixteen last summer. Only servant girls get confirmed *after* sixteen.'

That settled it then. In a spirit of gloomy resignation Jane engulfed herself in an orange.

There were bright stars above the church tower when she went to bed. She kept her head turned away as she drew the curtains, so that she should not see the gargoyles stretching their necks towards her window.

Friday evening found Jane at the last Confirmation class in the vestry with her father and three farmers' daughters, who talked in a curious mixture of broad Somerset and high school education and knew the catechism a great deal better than Jane.

After they had left, she followed closely at her father's elbow into the church to remove the hymn books and other vestiges of the choir practice that had taken place just before the class. The lamp he carried made a little patch of light wherever they moved; the outlying walls of darkness shifted, but pressed hard upon it from different quarters. The Rector was looking for his Plotinus, which he was certain he had put down somewhere in the church. He fumbled all over the Rectory pew while Jane

tried on vain pretexts to draw him away.

'I have looked in that corner – thoroughly,' she said.

The Rector sighed.

'What shall I say
Since Truth is dead?'

he inquired. 'So far from looking in that corner, Jane, you kept your head turned resolutely away from it.'

'Did I? I suppose I was looking at the list of Rectors. What a long one it is, and all dead but you, father.'

He at once forgot Plotinus and left the Rectory pew to pore with proud pleasure over the names that began with one Johannes de Martigny and ended with his own.

'A remarkably persistent list. Only two real gaps – in the Civil Wars and in the fourteenth century. That was at the time of the Black Death, when there was no rector of this parish for many years. You see, Jane? – 1349, and then there's no name till 1361 – Giraldus atte Welle. Do you remember when you were a little girl, very proud of knowing how to read, how you read through all the names to me, but refused to say that one? You said, 'It's a dreadful name,' and when I pressed you, you began to cry.'

'How silly! There's nothing dreadful in Giraldus atte Welle,' began Jane, but as she spoke she looked round her. She caught the Rector's arm. 'Father, there isn't any one in the church besides us, is there?'

'My dear child, of course not. What's the matter? You're not nervous, are you?'

'No, not really. But we can find the Plotinus much easier by daylight. Oh – and father – don't let's go out by the little door. Let's pretend we're the general congregation and go out properly by the big door.'

She pulled him down the aisle, talking all the way until they were both in his study. 'Father doesn't *know,*' she said to herself – 'he knows less than mother. It's funny, when he would understand so much more.'

But he understood that she was troubled. He asked: ' Don't you want to get confirmed, Jane?' and then: ' You musn't be if you don't want it.'

Jane grew frightened. There would be a great fuss if she backed out of it now after the very last class. Besides, there was the Crusader. Vague ideas of the initiation rites of knight and crusader crossed her mind in connection with the rite of Confirmation. He had spent a night's vigil in a church, perhaps in this very church. One could never fear anything else after that. If only she didn't have to go right up to the altar at the Communion service. But she would not think of that, she told the Rector that it was quite all right really, and at this moment they reached the hall door and met Mrs. Lacey hurrying towards them with a letter from Hugh, now at Oxford, who was coming home for the vacation on Wednesday.

' He asks if he may bring an undergraduate friend for the first few days – a Mr. York who is interested in old churches and Hugh thinks he would like to see ours. He must be clever – it is such a pity

Elizabeth is away – she is the only one who could talk to him; of course, he will enjoy talking with you, father dear, but men seem to expect girls too to be clever now. And just as Janey's Confirmation is coming on – she isn't taking it seriously enough as it is.'

'*Mother!* Don't you want us to play dum crambo like that last time Hugh brought friends down?'

'Nonsense,' said the Rector hastily. 'Dumb crambo requires so much attention that it should promote seriousness in all things. I am very glad the young man is coming, my love, and I will try my hardest to talk as cleverly as Elizabeth.'

He went upstairs with his wife, and said in a low voice: 'I think Jane is worrying rather too much about her Confirmation as it is. She seems quite jumpy sometimes.'

'Oh – *jumpy,* yes,' said Mrs. Lacey, as though she refused to consider jumpiness the right qualification for Confirmation. The question of the curtains in the spare room, however, proved more immediately absorbing.

Hugh, who preferred people to talk shop, introduced his friend's hobby the first evening at dinner. 'He goes grubbing over churches with a pencil and a bit of paper and finds things scratched on the walls and take rubbings of them and you call them *graffiti.* Now, then, father, any offers from our particular property?'

The Rector did not know of any specimens in his church. He asked what sort of things were scratched on the walls.

'Oh, anything,' said York, 'texts, scraps of dog

Latin, aphorisms – once I found the beginning of a love song. When a monk, or anyone who was doing a job in the church, got bored, he'd begin to scratch words on the wall just as one does on a seat or log or anything to-day. Only we nearly always write our names and they hardly ever did.'

He showed some of the rubbings he had taken. Often, he explained, you couldn't see anything but a few vague scratches, and then in the rubbing they came out much clearer. 'The bottom of a pillar is a good place to look,' he said, 'and corners – anywhere where they're not likely to be too plainly seen.'

'There are some marks on the wall near our pew,' said Jane. 'Low down, nearly on the ground.'

He looked at her, pleased, and distinguishing her consciously for the first time from her rather sharp-voiced sister. He saw a gawky girl whose grave, beautiful eyes were marred by deep hollows under them, as though she did not sleep enough. And Jane looked back with satisfaction at a pleasantly ugly, wide, good-humoured face.

She showed him the marks next morning, both squatting on their heels beside the wall. Hugh had strolled in with them, declaring that they were certain to find nothing better than names of the present choir boys, and had retired to the organ loft for an improvisation. York spread a piece of paper over the marks and rubbed his pencil all over it and asked polite questions about the church. Was it as haunted as it should be?

Jane, concerned for the honour of their church, replied that the villagers had sometimes seen lights in the windows at midnight; but York con-

temptuously dismissed that. 'You'd hear as much of any old church.' He pulled out an electric torch and switched it on to the wall.

'It's been cut in much more deeply at the top,' he remarked. 'I can read it even on the wall.' He spelt out slowly: 'Nemo potest duobus dominis servire.' 'That's a text from the Vulgate. It means, "No man can serve two masters."'

'And did the same man write the rest underneath, too?'

'No, I should think that was written much later, about the end of the fourteenth century. Hartley will tell me exactly. He's a friend of mine in the British Museum, and I send him the rubbings and he find out all about them.'

He examined the sentence on the paper by his torch, while Hugh's 'improvisation' sent horrible cacophonies reeling through the church.

'Latin again, and jolly bad – monkish Latin, you know. Can't make out that word. Oh!'

'Well?'

'It's an answer to the text above, I think. I say, this is the best find I've ever had. Look here, the first fellow wrote, "No man can serve two masters," and then, about a century after, number two squats down and writes – well, as far as I can make it out, it's like this: "Show service therefore to the good, but cleave unto the evil." Remarkable sentiment for a priest to leave in his church, for I'd imagine only the priest would be educated enough to write it. Now why did he say that, I wonder?'

'Because evil is more interesting than good,' murmured Jane.

'Hmph. You agree with him then? What kind of

evil?'

'I don't know. It's just – don't you know how words and sentences stick in your head sometimes? It's as though I were always hearing it.'

'Do you think you'll hear it to-morrow?' asked York maliciously. He had been told that to-morrow was the day of her Confirmation. She tried to jump up, but as she was cramped from squatting so long on her heels she only sat down instead, and they both burst out laughing.

'I'm sorry,' said York, 'I didn't mean to be offensive. But I'd like to know what's bothering you.'

'What do you mean?'

'Oh, you know. But never mind. I dare say you can't say.'

This at once caused an unusual flow of speech from Jane.

'Why should evil be interesting?' she gasped. 'It isn't in real life – when the servants steal the spoons and the villagers quarrel with their neighbours. Mrs. Elroy came round to father in a fearful stew the other day because old Mrs. Croft had made a maukin of her.'

'A what?'

'An image – you know – out of clay, and she was sticking pins in it, and Mrs. Elroy declared she knew every time a pin had gone in because she felt a stab right through her body.'

'What did you father say?'

'He said it was sciatica, but she wouldn't believe it, and he had to go round to Mrs. Croft and talk about Christmas peace and goodwill, but she only leered and yammered at him in the awful way she does, and then Alice said that Christmas blessings

only come to those who live at peace with their neighbours, and Mrs. Croft knew that blessings meant puddings, so she took the pins out, and let the maukin be, and Mrs. Elroy hasn't felt any more stabs.'

'Mrs. Croft is a proper witch, then?'

York stood up, looking rather curiously at her shining eyes.

'Cloud Martin has always been a terrible bad parish for witches,' said Jane proudly.

'You find *that* form of evil interesting," he said.

Jane was puzzled and abashed by his tone. She peered at the wall again and thought she could make out another mark underneath the others. York quickly took a rubbing and, examining the paper, found it to be one word only, and probably of the same date as the last sentence, which had caused so much discussion about evil.

'"Ma-ma," ah, I have it. "Maneo"-"I remain," that's all.'

'"*I* remain?" Who remains?'

'Why, the same "I" who advises us to cleave to evil. Remembering, perhaps, though it hadn't been said then, that the evil that men do lives after them.'

She looked at him with startled eyes. He thought she was a nice child but took things too seriously.

Hugh's attempts at jazz on the organ had faded away. As Jane and York left the church by the little door, they met him coming out through the vestry.

'Lots of luck,' said York, handing him the paper. 'Did you turn on the verger or anyone to look as well?'

'No – why? Aren't the family enough for you?'

'Rather. I was only wondering what that little man was doing by the door as we went out. You must have seen him, too,' he said, turning to Jane, 'he was quite close to us.'

But as she stared at him, he wished he had not spoken.

'Must have been the organist,' said Hugh, who was looking back at the church tower. 'Do you like gargoyles, York? There's rather a pretty one up there of a devil eating a child – see it?'

On the Sunday morning after the Confirmation, the day of her first Communion, Jane rose early, dressed by candlelight, met her mother and sister in the hall, and followed them through the raw, uncertain darkness of the garden and churchyard. The chancel windows were lighted up; the gargoyles on the church tower could just be seen, their distorted shapes a deeper black against the dark sky.

Jane slipped past her mother at the end of the pew. Except for the lights in the chancel, and the one small lamp that hung over the middle aisle, the church was dark, and one could not see who was there. Mr. Lacey was already in the chancel, and the service began. Jane had been to this service before, but never when the morning was dark like this. Perhaps that was what made it so different. For it *was* different.

Her father was doing such odd things up there at the altar. Why was he pacing backwards and forwards so often, and waving his hands in that funny way? And what *was* he saying? She couldn't make

out the words – she must have completely lost the place. She tried to find it in her prayer book, but the words to which she was listening gave her no clue; she could not recognize them at all, and presently she realized that not only were the words unknown to her, but so was the language in which they were spoken. Alice's rebuke came back to her: 'You shouldn't quote Latin in your sermons, father.' But this wasn't a sermon, it was the Communion service. Only in the Roman Catholic Church they would have the Communion service in Latin, and then it would be the Mass. Was father holding Mass? He would be turned out of the Church for being Roman. It was bewildering, it was dreadful. But her mother didn't seem to notice anything.

Did she notice that there were other people up there at the altar?

There was a brief pause. People came out of the darkness behind her, and went up to the chancel. Mrs. Lacey slipped out of the pew and joined them. Jane sat back and let her sister go past her.

'You are coming, Janey?' whispered Alice as she passed.

Jane nodded, but she sat still. She had let her mother and sister leave her; she stared at the two rows of dark figures standing in the chancel behind the row of those who knelt; she could not see her mother and sister among them; she could not see anyone whom she knew.

She dared not look again at the figures by the altar; she kept her head bowed. The last time she had looked there had been two others standing by her father – that is, if that little dark figure had

indeed been her father. If she looked now, would she see him there? Her head bent lower and sank into her hands. Instead of the one low voice murmuring the words of the Sacrament, a muffled chant of many voices came from the chancel.

She heard the scuffle of feet, but no steps came past her down into the church again. What were they doing up there? At last she had to look, and she saw that the two rows were standing facing each other across the chancel, instead of each behind the other. She tried to distinguish their faces, to recognize even one that she knew. Presently she became aware that why she could not do this was because they had no faces. The figures all wore dark cloaks with hoods, and there were blank white spaces under the hoods.

'It is possible,' she said to herself, 'that those are masks.' She formed the words in her mind deliberately and with precision as though to distract her attention; for she felt in danger of screaming aloud with terror, and whatever happened she must not draw down on her the attention of those waiting figures. She knew now that they were waiting for her to go up to the altar.

She might slip out by the little door and escape, if only she dared to move. She stood up and saw the Crusader lying before her, armed, on guard, his sword half drawn from its scabbard. Her breath was choking her. 'Crusader, Crusader, rise and help me,' she prayed very fast in her mind. But the Crusader stayed motionless. She must go out by herself. With a blind, rushing movement, she threw herself on to the little door, dragged it open, and got outside.

Mrs. Lacey and Alice thought that Jane, wishing for solitude, must have returned from the Communion table to some other pew. Only Mr. Lacey knew that she had not come up to the Communion table at all; and it troubled him still more when she did not appear at breakfast. Alice thought she had gone for a walk; Mrs. Lacey said in her vague, late-Victorian way that she thought it only natural Jane should wish to be alone for a little.

'I should say it was decidedly more natural that she should wish for sausages and coffee after being up for an hour on a raw December morning,' said her husband with unusual asperity.

It was York who found her half an hour later walking very fast through the fields. He took her hands, which felt frozen, and as he looked into her face he said: 'Look here, you know, this won't do. What are you so frightened of?' And then broke off his questions, told her not to bother to try and speak but to come back to breakfast, and half pulled her with him through the thick, slimy mud, back to the Rectory. Suddenly she began to tell him that the Early Service that morning had all been different – the people, their clothes, even the language, it was all quite different.

He thought over what she stammered out, and wondered if she could somehow have had the power to go back in time and see and hear the Latin Mass as it used to be in that old church.

'The old Latin Mass wasn't a horrible thing, was it?'

'Jane! Your father's daughter needn't ask that.'

'No. I see. Then it wasn't the Mass I saw this morning – it was—' She spoke very low so that he

could hardly catch the words. 'There was something horrible going on up there by the altar – and they were waiting – waiting for me.'

Her hand trembled under his arm. He thrust it down into his pocket on the pretext of warming it. It seemed to him monstrous that this nice, straightforward little schoolgirl, whom he liked best of the family, should be hag-ridden like this.

That evening he wrote a long letter to his antiquarian friend, Hartley, enclosing the pencil rubbings he had taken of the words scratched on the wall by the Rectory pew.

On Monday he was leaving them, to go and look at other churches in Somerset. He looked hard at Jane as he said good-bye. She seemed to have completely forgotten whatever it was that had so distressed her the day before, and at breakfast had been the jolliest of the party. But when she felt York's eyes upon her, the laughter died out of hers; she said, but not as though she had intended to say it: 'You will come back for Wednesday.'

'Why, what happens on Wednesday?'

'It is full moon then.'

'That's not this Wednesday then, it must be Wednesday week. Why do you want me to come back then?'

She could give no answer to that. She turned self-conscious and began an out-of-date jazz song about 'Wednesday week way down in old Bengal!'

It was plain she did not know why she had said it. But he promised himself that he would come back by then, and asked Mrs. Lacey if he might look them up again on his way home.

In the intervening ten days he was able to piece

together some surprising information from Hartley which seem to throw a light on the inscriptions he had found at Cloud Martin.

In the reports of certain trials for sorcery in the year 1474, one Giraldus atte Welle, priest of the parish of Cloud Martin in Somerset, confessed under torture to having held the Blass Mass in his church at midnight on the very altar where he administered the Blessed Sacrament on Sundays. This was generally done on Wednesday or Thursday, the chief days of the Witches' Sabbath when they happened to fall on the night of the full moon. The priest would then enter the church by the little side door, and from the darkness in the body of the church those villagers who had followed his example and sworn themselves to Satan, would come up and join him, one by one, hooded and masked, that none might recognize the other. He was charged with having secretly decoyed young children in order to kill them on the altar as a sacrifice to Satan, and he was finally charged with attempting to murder a young virgin for that purpose.

All the accused made free confessions towards the end of their trial, especially in so far as they implicated other people. All however were agreed on a certain strange incident. That just as the priest was about to cut the throat of the girl on the altar, the tomb of the Crusader opened, and the knight who had lain there for two centuries arose and came upon them with drawn sword, so that they scattered and fled through the church, leaving the girl unharmed on the altar.

With these reports from Hartley in his pocket,

York travelled back on the Wednesday week by slow cross-country trains that managed to miss their connections and land him at Little Borridge, the station for Cloud Martin, at a quarter-past ten. The village cab had broken down, there was no other car to be had at that hour, it was a six-mile walk up to the Rectory, there was a station hotel where it would be far more reasonable to spend the night, and finish his journey next morning. Yet York refused to consider this alternative; all through the maddening and uncertain journey, he had kept saying to himself: 'I shall be late,' though he did not know for what. He had promised Jane he would be back this Wednesday, and back he must be. He left his luggage at the station and walked up. It was the night of the full moon, but the sky was so covered with cloud as to be almost dark. Once or twice he missed his way in following the elaborate instructions of the station-master, and had to retrace his steps a little. It was hard on twelve o'clock when at last he saw the square tower of Cloud Martin church, a solid blackness against the flying clouds.

He walked up to the little gate into the churchyard. There was a faint light from the chancel windows, and he thought he heard voices chanting. He paused to listen, and then he was certain of it, for he could hear the silence when they stopped. It might have been a minute or five minutes later, that he heard the most terrible shriek he had ever imagined, though faint, coming as it did from the closed church; and knew it for Jane's voice. He ran up to the little door and heard that scream again and again. As he broke through the door he heard

it cry: 'Crusader! Crusader!' The church was in utter darkness, there was no light in the chancel, he had to fumble in his pockets for his electric torch. The screams had stopped and the whole place was silent. He flashed his torch right and left, and saw a figure lying huddled against the altar. He knew that it was Jane; in an instant he had reached her. Her eyes were open, looking at him, but they did not know him, and she did not seem to understand him when he spoke. In a strange, rough accent of broad Somerset that he could scarcely distinguish, she said: 'It was my body on the altar!'

ANCIENT SORCERIES

BY ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

THERE ARE, IT WOULD appear, certain wholly unremarkable persons, with none of the characteristics that invite adventure, who yet once or twice in the course of their smooth lives undergo an experience so strange that the world catches its breath – and looks the other way! And it was cases of this kind, perhaps, more than any other, that fell into the widespread net of John Silence, the psychic doctor, and, appealing to his deep humanity, to his patience, and to his great qualities of spiritual sympathy, led often to the revelation of problems of the strangest complexity, and of the profoundest possible human interest.

Matters that seemed almost too curious and fantastic for belief he loved to trace to their hidden sources. To unravel a tangle in the very soul of things – and to release a suffering human soul in the process – was with him a veritable passion. And the knots he untied were, indeed, often passing strange.

The world, of course, asks for some plausible basis

to which it can attach credence – something it can, at least, pretend to explain. The adventurous type it can understand: such people carry about with them an adequate explanation of their exciting lives, and their characters obviously drive them into the circumstances which produce the adventures. It expects nothing else from them, and is satisfied. But dull, ordinary folk have no right to out-of-the-way experiences, and the world having been led to expect otherwise, is disappointed with them, not to say shocked. Its complacent judgment has been rudely disturbed.

'Such a thing happen to *that* man!' it cries – 'a commonplace person like that! It is too absurd! There must be something wrong!'

Yet there could be no question that something did actually happen to little Arthur Vezin, something of the curious nature he described to Dr. Silence. Outwardly, or inwardly, it happened beyond a doubt, and in spite of the jeers of his few friends who heard the tale, and observed wisely that 'such a thing might perhaps have come to Iszard, that crack-brained Iszard, or to that odd fish Minski, but it could never have happened to commonplace little Vezin, who was fore-ordained to live and die according to scale.'

But, whatever his method of death was, Vezin certainly did not 'live according to scale' so far as this particular event in his otherwise uneventful life was concerned; and to hear him recount it, and watch his pale delicate features change, and hear his voice grow softer and more hushed as he proceeded, was to know the conviction that his halting words perhaps failed sometimes to convey. He

lived the thing over again and again each time he told it. His whole personality became muffled in the recital. It subdued him more than ever, so that the tale became a lengthy apology for an experience that he deprecated. He appeared to excuse himself and to ask your pardon for having dared to take part in so fantastic an episode. For little Vezin was a timid, gentle, sensitive soul, rarely able to assert himself, tender to man and beast, and almost constitutionally unable to say No, or to claim many things that should rightly have been his. His whole scheme of life seemed utterly remote from anything more exciting than missing a train or losing an umbrella on an omnibus. And when this curious event came upon him he was already more years beyond forty than his friends suspected or he cared to admit.

John Silence, who heard him speak of his experience more than once, said that he sometimes left out certain details and put in others; yet they were all obviously true. The whole scene was unforgettably cinematographed on to his mind. None of the details were imagined or invented. And when he told the story with them all complete, the effect was undeniable. His appealing brown eyes shone, and much of the charming personality, usually so carefully repressed, came forward and revealed itself. His modesty was always there, of course, but in the telling he forgot the present and allowed himself to appear almost vividly as he lived again in the past of his adventure.

He was on the way home when it happened, crossing northern France from some mountain trip or other where he buried himself solitary-wise every

summer. He had nothing but an unregistered bag in the rack, and the train was jammed to suffocation, most of the passengers being unredeemed holiday English. He disliked them, not because they were his fellow-countrymen, but because they were noisy and obtrusive, obliterating with their big limbs and tweed clothing all the quieter tints of the day that brought him satisfaction and enabled him to melt into insignificance and forget that he was anybody. These English clashed about him like a brass band, making him feel vaguely that he ought to be more self-assertive and obstreperous, and that he did not claim insistently enough all kinds of things that he didn't want and that were really valueless, such as corner seats, windows up or down, and so forth.

So that he felt uncomfortable in the train, and wished the journey were over and he was back again living with his unmarried sister in Surbiton.

And when the train stopped for ten panting minutes at the little station in northern France, and he got out to stretch his legs on the platform, and saw to his dismay a further batch of the British Isles debouching from another train it suddenly seemed impossible to him to continue the journey. Even *his* flabby soul revolted, and the idea of staying a night in the little town and going on next day by a slower, emptier train, flashed into his mind. The guard was already shouting 'En voiture,' and the corridor of his compartment was already packed, when the thought came to him. And, for once, he acted with decision and rushed to snatch his bag.

Finding the corridor and steps impassable, he

tapped at the window (for he had a corner seat) and begged the Frenchman who sat opposite to hand his luggage out to him, explaining in his wretched French that he intended to break the journey there. And this elderly Frenchman, he declared, gave him a look, half of warning, half of reproach, that to his dying day he could never forget; handed the bag through the window of the moving train; and at the same time poured into his ears a long sentence, spoken rapidly and low, of which he was able to comprehend only the last few words: *'à cause du sommeil et à cause des chats.'*

In reply to Dr. Silence, whose singular psychic acuteness at once seized upon this Frenchman as a vital point in the adventure, Vezin admitted that the man had impressed him favourably from the beginning, though without being able to explain why. They had sat facing one another during the four hours of the journey, and though no conversation had passed between them – Vezin was timid about his stuttering French – he confessed that his eyes were being continually drawn to his face, almost, he felt, to rudeness, and that each, by a dozen nameless little politenesses and attentions, had evinced the desire to be kind. The men liked each other and their personalities did not clash, or would not have clashed had they chanced to come to terms of acquaintance. The Frenchman, indeed, seemed to have exercised a silent protective influence over the insignificant little Englishman, and without words or gestures betrayed that he wished him well and would gladly have been of service to him.

'And this sentence that he hurled at you after the

bag?' asked John Silence, smiling that peculiarly sympathetic smile that always melted the prejudices of his patient, 'were you unable to follow it exactly?'

'It was so quick and low and vehement,' explained Vezin, in his small voice, 'that I missed practically the whole of it. I only caught the few words at the very end, because he spoke them so clearly, and his face was bent down out of the carriage window so near to mine.'

' "*A cause du sommeil et à cause des chats*" '? repeated Dr. Silence, as though half speaking to himself.

'That's it, exactly,' said Vezin; 'which, I take it means something like "because of sleep and because of the cats," doesn't it?'

'Certainly, that's how I should translate it,' the doctor observed shortly, evidently not wishing to interrupt more than necessary.

'And the rest of the sentence – all the first part I couldn't understand, I mean – was a warning not to do something – not to stop in the town, or at some particular place in the town, perhaps. That was the impression it made on me.'

Then, of course, the train rushed off, and left Vezin standing on the platform alone and rather forlorn.

The little town climbed in straggling fashion up a sharp hill rising out of the plain at the back of the station, and was crowned by the twin towers of the ruined cathedral peeping over the summit. From the station itself it looked uninteresting and modern, but the fact was that the medieval position lay out of sight just beyond the crest. And once

he reached the top and entered the old streets, he stepped clean out of modern life into a bygone century. The noise and bustle of the crowded train seemed days away. The spirit of this silent hill-town, remote from tourists and motor-cars, dreaming its own quiet life under the autumn sun, rose up and cast its spell upon him. Long before he recognised this spell he acted under it. He walked softly, almost on tiptoe, down the winding narrow streets where the gables all but met over his head, and he entered the doorway of the solitary inn with a deprecating and modest demeanour that was in itself an apology for intruding upon the place and disturbing its dream.

At first, however, Vezin said, he noticed very little of all this. The attempt at analysis came much later. What struck him then was only the delightful contrast of the silence and peace after the dust and noisy rattle of the train. He felt soothed and stroked like a cat.

'Like a cat, you said?' interrupted John Silence, quickly catching him up.

'Yes. At the very start I felt that.' He laughed apologetically. 'I felt as though the warmth and the stillness and the comfort made me purr. It seemed to be the general mood of the whole place – then.'

The inn, a rambling, ancient house, the atmosphere of the old coaching days still about it, apparently did not welcome him too warmly. He felt he was only tolerated, he said. But it was cheap and comfortable, and the delicious cup of afternoon tea he ordered at once made him feel really very pleased with himself for leaving the train in this bold, original way. For to him it had seemed bold

and original. He felt something of a dog. His room, too, soothed him with its dark panelling and low, irregular ceiling, and the long, sloping passage that led to it seemed the natural pathway to a real Chamber of Sleep – a little, dim, cubby hole out of the world where noise could not enter. It looked upon the courtyard at the back. It was all very charming, and made him think of himself as dressed in very soft velvet somehow, and the floors seemed padded, the walls provided with cushions. The sounds of the streets could not penetrate there. It was an atmosphere of absolute rest that surrounded him.

On engaging the two-franc room he had interviewed the only person who seemed to be about that sleepy afternoon, an elderly waiter with Dundreary whiskers and a drowsy courtesy, who had ambled lazily towards him across the stone yard; but on coming downstairs again for a little promenade in the town before dinner he encountered the proprietress herself. She was a large woman whose hands, feet, and features seemed to swim towards him out of a sea of person. They merged, so to speak. But she had great, dark, vivacious eyes that counteracted the bulk of her body, and betrayed the fact that in reality she was both vigorous and alert. When he first caught sight of her she was knitting in a low chair against the sunlight of the wall, and something at once made him see her as a great tabby cat, dozing, yet awake, heavily sleepy, and yet at the same time prepared for instantaneous action. A great mouser on the watch occurred to him.

She took him in with a single, comprehensive

glance that was polite without being cordial. Her neck, he noticed, was extraordinarily supple in spite of its proportions, for it turned so easily to follow him, and the head it carried bowed so very flexibly.

'But when she looked at me, you know,' said Vezin, with that little, apologetic smile in his brown eyes, and that faintly deprecating gesture of the shoulders that was characteristic of him, 'the odd notion came to me that really she had intended to make quite a different movement, and that with a single bound she could have leaped at me across the width of that stone yard and pounced upon me like some huge cat upon a mouse.'

He laughed a little, soft laugh, and Dr. Silence made a note in his book without interrupting, while Vezin proceeded in a tone as though he feared he had already told too much, and more than we could believe.

'Very soft, yet very active she was, for all her size and mass, and I felt she knew what I was doing even after I had passed and was behind her back. She spoke to me, and her voice was smooth and running. She asked if I had my luggage, and was comfortable in my room, and then added that dinner was at seven o'clock, and that they were very early people in this little country town. Clearly, she intended to convey that late hours were not encouraged.'

Evidently, she contrived by voice and manner to give him the impression that here he would be 'managed,' that everything would be arranged and planned for him, and that he had nothing to do but fall into the groove and obey. No decided action or

sharp personal effort would be looked for from him. It was the very reverse of the train. He walked quietly out into the street, feeling soothed and peaceful. He realized that he was in a *milieu* that suited him and stroked him the right way. It was so much easier to be obedient. He began to purr again, and to feel that all the town purred with him.

About the streets of that little town he meandered gently, falling deeper and deeper into the spirit of repose that characterized it. With no special aim he wandered up and down, to and fro. The September sunshine fell slantingly over the roofs. Down winding alleyways, fringed with tumbling gables and open casements, he caught fairylike glimpses of the great plain below, and of the meadows and yellow copses lying like a dream-map in the haze. The spell of the past held very potently here, he felt.

The streets were full of picturesquely garbed men and women, all busy enough, going their respective ways; but no one took any notice of him or turned to stare at his obviously English appearance. He was even able to forget that with his tourist appearance he was a false note in a charming picture, and he melted more and more into the scene, feeling delightfully insignificant and unimportant and unself-conscious. It was like becoming part of a softly-coloured dream which he did not even realise to be a dream.

On the eastern side the hill fell away more sharply, and the plain below ran off rather suddenly into a sea of gathering shadows in which the little patches of woodland looked like islands and the stubble fields like deep water. Here he strolled

along the old ramparts of ancient fortifications that once had been formidable, but now were only vision-like with their charming mingling of broken, grey walls and wayward vine and ivy. From the broad coping on which he sat for a moment, level with the rounded tops of clipped plane trees, he saw the esplanade far below lying in shadow. Here and there a yellow sunbeam crept in and lay upon the fallen yellow leaves, and from the height he looked down and saw that the townsfolk were walking to and fro in the cool of the evening. He could just hear the sound of their slow footfalls, and the murmur of their voices floated up to him through the gaps between the trees. The figures looked like shadows as he caught glimpses of their quiet movements far below.

He sat there for some time pondering, bathed in the waves of murmurs and half-lost echoes that rose to his ears, muffled by the leaves of the plane trees. The whole town, and the little hill out of which it grew as naturally as an ancient wood, seemed to him like a being lying there half asleep on the plain and crooning to itself as it dozed.

And, presently, as he sat lazily melting into its dream, a sound of horns and strings and wood instruments rose to his ears, and the town band began to play at the far end of the crowded terrace below to the accompaniment of a very soft deep-throated drum. Vezin was very sensitive to music, knew about it intelligently, and had even ventured, unknown to his friends, upon the composition of quiet melodies with low-running chords which he played to himself with the soft pedal when no one was about. And this music, floating up through the

trees, from an invisible and doubtless very picturesque band of the townspeople, wholly charmed him. He recognized nothing that they played, and it sounded as though they were simply improvizing without a conductor. No definitely marked time ran through the pieces, which ended and began oddly after the fashion of wind through an Æolian harp. It was part of the place and scene, just as the dying sunlight and faintly breathing wind were part of the scene and hour, and the mellow notes of old-fashioned, plaintive horns, pierced here and there by sharper strings, all half smothered by the continuous booming of the deep drum, touched his soul with a curiously potent spell that was almost too engrossing to be quite pleasant.

There was a certain queer sense of bewitchment in it all. The music seemed to him oddly unartificial. It made him think of trees swept by the wind, of night breezes singing among wires and chimney-stacks, or in the rigging of invisible ships; or – and the simile leaped up in his thoughts with a sudden sharpness of suggestion – a chorus of animals, of wild creatures, somewhere in desolate places of the world, crying and singing as animals will, to the moon. He could fancy he heard the wailing, half-human cries of cats upon the tiles at night, rising and falling with weird intervals of sound, and this music, muffled by distance and the trees, made him think of a queer company of these creatures on some roof far away in the sky, uttering their solemn music to one another and the moon in chorus.

It was, he felt at the time, a singular image to occur to him, yet it expressed his sensation pictorially better than anything else. The instruments

played such impossibly odd intervals, and the crescendos and diminuendos were so very suggestive of cat-land on the tiles at night, rising swiftly, dropping without warning to deep notes again, and all in such strange confusion of discords and accords. But, at the same time a plaintive sweetness resulted on the whole, and the discords of these half-broken instruments were so singular that they did not distress his musical soul like fiddles out of tune.

He listened a long time, wholly surrendering himself as his character was, and then strolled homewards in the dusk as the air grew chilly.

'There was nothing to alarm?' put in Dr. Silence briefly.

'Absolutely nothing,' said Vezin; 'but you know it was all so fantastical and charming that my imagination was profoundly impressed. Perhaps, too,' he continued, gently explanatory, 'it was this stirring of my imagination that caused other impressions; for as I walked back the spell of the place began to steal over me in a dozen ways, though all intelligible ways. But there were other things I could not account for in the least, even then.'

'Incidents, you mean?'

'Hardly incidents, I think. A lot of vivid sensations crowded themselves upon my mind and I could trace them to no causes. It was just after sunset and the tumbled old buildings traced magical outlines against an opalescent sky of gold and red. The dusk was running down the twisted streets. All round the hill the plain pressed in like a dim sea, its level rising with the darkness. The spell of this kind of scene, you know, can be very moving,

and it was so that night. Yet I felt that what came to me had nothing directly to do with the mystery and wonder of the scene.'

'Not merely the subtle transformations of the spirit that come with beauty,' put in the doctor, noticing his hesitation.

'Exactly,' Vezin went on, duly encouraged and no longer so fearful of our smiles at his expense. 'The impressions came from somewhere else. For instance, down the busy main street where men and women were bustling home from work, shopping, all the rest of it, I saw that I roused no interest and that no one turned to stare at me as a foreigner and stranger. I was utterly ignored, and my presence among them excited no special interest or attention.

'And then, quite suddenly, it dawned upon me with conviction that all the time this indifference and inattention were merely feigned. Everybody, as a matter of fact, was watching me closely. Every movement I made was known and observed. Ignoring me was all a pretence – an elaborate pretence.'

He paused a moment and looked at us to see if we were smiling, and then continued, reassured –

'It is useless to ask me how I noticed this, because I simply cannot explain it. But the discovery gave me something of a shock. Before I got back to the inn, however, another curious thing rose up strongly in my mind and forced my recognition of it as true. And this, too, I may as well say at once, was equally inexplicable to me. I mean I can only give you the fact, as fact it was to me.'

The little man left his chair and stood on the mat before the fire. His diffidence lessened from now onwards, as he lost himself again in the magic of the

old adventure. His eyes shone a little already as he talked.

'Well,' he went on, his soft voice rising somewhat with his excitement, 'I was in a shop when it came to me first – though the idea must have been at work for a long time subconsciously to appear in so complete a form all at once. I was buying socks, I think,' he laughed, 'and struggling with my dreadful French, when it struck me that the woman in the shop did not care two pins whether I bought anything or not. She was indifferent whether she made a sale or did not make a sale. She was only pretending to sell.

'This sounds a very small and fanciful incident to build upon what follows. But really it was not small. I mean it was the spark that lit the line of powder and ran along to the big blaze in my mind.

'For the whole town, I suddenly realized, was something other than I so far saw it. The real activities and interests of the people were elsewhere and otherwise than appeared. Their true lives lay somewhere out of sight behind the scenes. Their busy-ness was but the outward semblance that masked their actual purposes. They bought and sold, and ate and drank, and walked about the streets, yet all the while the main stream of their existence lay somewhere beyond my ken, underground, in secret places. In the shops and at the stalls they did not care whether I purchased their articles or not; at the inn, they were indifferent to my staying or going; their life lay remote from my own, springing from hidden, mysterious sources, coursing out of sight, unknown. It was all a great, elaborate pretence, assumed possibly for my benefit,

or possibly for purposes of their own. But the main current of their energies ran elsewhere. I almost felt as an unwelcome foreign substance might be expected to feel when it has found its way into the human system, and the whole body organises itself to eject it or to absorb it. The town was doing this very thing to me.

'This bizarre notion presented itself forcibly to my mind as I walked home to the inn, and I began busily to wonder wherein the true life of this town could lie and what were the actual interests and activities of its hidden life.

'And, now that my eyes were partly opened, I noticed other things too that puzzled me, first of which, I think, was the extraordinary silence of the whole place. Positively, the town was muffled. Although the streets were paved with cobbles the people moved about silently, softly, with padded feet, like cats. Nothing made noise. All was hushed, subdued, muted. The very voices were quiet, low-pitched, like purring. Nothing clamorous, vehement, or emphatic seemed able to live in the drowsy atmosphere of soft dreaming that soothed this little hill-town into its sleep. It was like the woman at the inn – an outward repose screening intense inner activity and purpose.

'Yet there was no sign of lethargy or sluggishness anywhere about it. The people were active and alert. Only a magical and uncanny softness lay over them all like a spell.'

Vezin passed his hand across his eyes for a moment as though the memory had become very vivid. His voice had run off into a whisper so that we heard the last part with difficulty. He was telling a true

thing obviously, yet something that he both liked and hated telling.

'I went back to the inn,' he continued presently in a louder voice, 'and dined. I felt a new strange world about me. My old world of reality receded. Here, whether I liked it or no, was something new and incomprehensible. I regretted having left the train so impulsively. An adventure was upon me, and I loathed adventures as foreign to my nature. Moreover, this was the beginning apparently of an adventure somewhere deep within me, in a region I could not check or measure, and a feeling of alarm mingled itself with my wonder – alarm for the stability of what I had for forty years recognized as my "personality."

'I went upstairs to bed, my mind teeming with thoughts that were unusual to me, and of rather a haunting description. By way of relief I kept thinking of that nice, prosaic noisy train and all those wholesome, blustering passengers. I almost wished I were with them again. But my dreams took me elsewhere. I dreamed of cats, and soft-moving creatures, and the silence of life in a dim muffled world beyond the senses.'

II

Vezin stayed on from day to day, indefinitely, much longer than he had intended. He felt in a kind of dazed, somnolent condition. He did nothing in particular, but the place fascinated him and he could not decide to leave. Decisions were always very difficult for him and he sometimes wondered how he had ever brought himself to the point of leaving the train. It seemed as though some one

else must have arranged it for him, and once or twice his thoughts ran to the swarthy Frenchman who had sat opposite. If only he could have understood that long sentence ending so strangely with *' à cause du sommeil et à cause des chats.'* He wondered what it all meant.

Meanwhile the hushed softness of the town held him prisoner and he sought in his muddling, gentle way to find out where the mystery lay, and what it was all about. But his limited French and his constitutional hatred of active investigation made it hard for him to buttonhole anybody and ask questions. He was content to observe, and watch, and remain negative.

The weather held on calm and hazy, and this just suited him. He wandered about the town till he knew every street and alley. The people suffered him to come and go without let or hindrance, though it became clearer to him every day that he was never free himself from observation. The town watched him as a cat watches a mouse. And he got no nearer to finding out what they were all so busy with or where the main stream of their activities lay. This remained hidden. The people were as soft and mysterious as cats.

But that he was continually under observation became more evident from day to day.

For instance, when he strolled to the end of the town and entered a little green public garden beneath the ramparts and seated himself upon one of the empty benches in the sun, he was quite alone – at first. Not another seat was occupied; the little park was empty, the paths deserted. Yet, within ten minutes of his coming, there must have been

fully twenty persons scattered about him, some strolling aimlessly along the gravel walks, staring at the flowers, and others seated on wooden benches enjoying the sun like himself. None of them appeared to take any notice of him; yet he understood quite well they had all come there to watch. They kept him under close observation. In the street they had seemed busy enough, hurrying upon various errands; yet these were suddenly all forgotten and they had nothing to do but loll and laze in the sun, their duties unremembered. Five minutes after he left, the garden was again deserted, the seats vacant. But in the crowded street it was the same thing again; he was never alone. He was ever in their thoughts.

By degrees, too, he began to see how it was he was so cleverly watched, yet without the appearance of it. The people did nothing *directly*. They behaved *obliquely*. He laughed in his mind as the thought thus clothed itself in words, but the phrase exactly described it. They looked at him from angles which naturally should have led their sight in another direction altogether. Their movements were oblique, too, so far as these concerned himself. The straight, direct thing was not their way evidently. They did nothing obviously. If he entered a shop to buy, the woman walked instantly away and busied herself with something at the farther end of the counter, though answering at once when he spoke, showing that she knew he was there and that this was only her way of attending to him. It was the fashion of the cat she followed. Even in the dining-room of the inn the be-whiskered and courteous waiter, lithe and silent in all his movements,

never seemed able to come straight to his table for an order or a dish. He came by zigzags, indirectly, vaguely, so that he appeared to be going to another table altogether, and only turned suddenly at the last moment, and was there beside him.

Vezin smiled curiously to himself as he described how he began to realise these things. Other tourists there were none in the hostel, but he recalled the figures of one or two old men, inhabitants, who took their *déjeuner* and dinner there, and remembered how fantastically they entered the room in similar fashion. First, they paused in the doorway, peering about the room, and then, after a temporary inspection, they came in, as it were, sideways, keeping close to the walls so that he wondered which table they were making for, and at the last minute making almost a little quick run to their particular seats. And again he thought of the ways and methods of cats.

Other small incidents, too, impressed him as all part of this queer, soft town with its muffled, indirect, life, for the way some of the people appeared and disappeared with extraordinary swiftness puzzled him exceedingly. It may have been all perfectly natural, he knew, yet he could not make it out how the alleys swallowed them up and shot them forth in a second of time when there were no visible doorways or openings near enough to explain the phenomenon. Once he followed two elderly women who, he felt, had been particularly examining him across the street – quite near the inn this was – and saw them turn the corner a few feet only in front of him. Yet when he sharply followed on their heels he saw nothing but an utterly deserted alley

stretching in front of him with no sign of a living thing. And the only opening through which they could have escaped was a porch some fifty yards away, which not the swiftest human runner could have reached in time.

And in just such sudden fashion people appeared when he never expected them. Once when he heard a great noise of fighting going on behind a low wall, and hurried up to see what was going on, what should he see but a group of girls and women engaged in vociferous conversation which instantly hushed itself to the normal whispering note of the town when his head appeared over the wall. And even then none of them turned to look at him directly, but slunk off with the most unaccountable rapidity into doors and sheds across the yard. And their voices, he thought, had sounded so like, so strangely like, the angry snarling of fighting animals, almost of cats.

The whole spirit of the town, however, continued to evade him as something elusive, protean, screened from the outer world, and at the same time intensely, genuinely vital; and, since he now formed part of its life, this concealment puzzled and irritated him; more – it began rather to frighten him.

Out of the mists that slowly gathered about his ordinary surface thoughts there rose again the idea that the inhabitants were waiting for him to declare himself, to take an attitude, to do this, or to do that; and that when he had done so they in their turn would at length make some direct response, accepting or rejecting him. Yet the vital matter concerning which his decision was awaited came

no nearer to him.

Once or twice he purposely followed little processions or groups of the citizens in order to find out, if possible, on what purpose they were bent; but they always discovered him in time and dwindled away, each individual going his or her own way. It was always the same: he never could learn what their main interest was. The cathedral was ever empty, the old church of St. Martin, at the other end of the town, deserted. They shopped because they had to, and not because they wished to. The booths stood neglected, the stalls unvisited, the little cafés desolate. Yet the streets were always full, the townsfolk ever on the bustle.

'Can it be,' he thought to himself, yet with a deprecating laugh that he should have dared to think anything so odd, 'can it be that these people are people of the twilight, that they live only at night their real life, and come out honestly only with the dusk? That during the day they make a sham though brave pretence, and after the sun is down their true life begins? Have they the souls of night-things, and is the whole blessed town in the hands of the cats?'

The fancy somehow electrified him with little shocks of shrinking and dismay. Yet, though he affected to laugh, he knew that he was beginning to feel more than uneasy, and that strange forces were tugging with a thousand invisible chords at the very centre of his being. Something utterly remote from his ordinary life, something that had not waked for years, began faintly to stir in his soul, sending feelers abroad into his brain and heart, shaping queer thoughts and penetrating

even into certain of his minor actions. Something exceedingly vital to himself, to his soul, hung in the balance.

And always when he returned to the inn about the hour of sunset, he saw the figures of the townsfolk stealing through the dusk from their shop doors, moving sentry-wise to and fro at the corners of the streets, yet always vanishing silently like shadows at his near approach. And as the inn invariably closed its doors at ten o'clock he had never yet found the opportunity he rather half-heartedly sought to see for himself what account the town could give of itself at night.

'—*à cause du sommeil et à cause des chats*' – the words now rang in his ears more and more often, though still as yet without any definite meaning.

Moreover, something made him sleep like the dead.

III

It was, I think, on the fifth day – though in this detail his story sometimes varied – that he made a definite discovery which increased his alarm and brought him up to a rather sharp climax. Before that he had already noticed that a change was going forward and certain subtle transformations being brought about in his character which modified several of his minor habits. And he had affected to ignore them. Here, however, was something he could no longer ignore; and it startled him.

At the best of times he was never very positive, always negative rather, compliant and acquiescent; yet, when necessity arose he was capable of reasonably vigorous action and could take a strongish

decision. The discovery he now made that brought him up with such a sharp turn was that this power had positively dwindled to nothing. He found it impossible to make up his mind. For, on this fifth day, he realised that he had stayed long enough in the town and that for reasons he could only vaguely define to himself it was wiser *and safer* that he should leave.

And he found that he could not leave!

This is difficult to describe in words, and it was more by gesture and the expression of his face that he conveyed to Dr. Silence the state of impotence he had reached. All this spying and watching, he said, had as it were spun a net about his feet so that he was trapped and powerless to escape; he felt like a fly that had blundered into the intricacies of a great web; he was caught, imprisoned, and could not get away. It was a distressing sensation. A numbness had crept over his will till it had become almost incapable of decision. The mere thought of vigorous action – action towards escape – began to terrify him. All the currents of his life had turned inwards upon himself, striving to bring to the surface something that lay buried almost beyond reach, determined to force his recognition of something he had long forgotten – forgotten years upon years, centuries almost ago. It seemed as though a window deep within his being would presently open and reveal an entirely new world, yet somehow a world that was not unfamiliar. Beyond that, again, he fancied a great curtain hung; and when that too rolled up he would see still farther into this region and at last understand something of the secret life of these extraordinary people.

'Is this why they wait and watch?' he asked himself with rather a shaking heart, 'for the time when I shall join them – or refuse to join them? Does the decision rest with me after all, and not with them?'

And it was at this point that the sinister character of the adventure first really declared itself, and he became genuinely alarmed. The stability of his rather fluid little personality was at stake, he felt, and something in his heart turned coward.

Why otherwise should he have suddenly taken to walking stealthily, silently, making as little sound as possible, for ever looking behind him? Why else should he have moved almost on tiptoe about the passages of the practically deserted inn, and when he was abroad have found himself deliberately taking advantage of what cover presented itself? And why, if he was not afraid, should the wisdom of staying indoors after sundown have suddenly occurred to him as eminently desirable? Why, indeed?

And, when John Silence gently pressed him for an explanation of these things, he admitted apologetically that he had none to give.

'It was simply that I feared something might happen to me unless I kept a sharp look-out. I felt afraid. It was instinctive,' was all he could say. 'I got the impression that the whole town was after me – wanted me for something; and that if it got me I should lose myself, or at least the Self I knew, in some unfamiliar state of consciousness. But I am not a psychologist, you know,' he added meekly, 'and I cannot define it better than that.'

It was while lounging in the courtyard half an

hour before the evening meal that Vezin made this discovery, and he at once went upstairs to his quiet room at the end of the winding passage to think it over alone. In the yard it was empty enough, true, but there was always the possibility that the big woman whom he dreaded would come out of some door, with her pretence of knitting, to sit and watch him. This had happened several times, and he could not endure the sight of her. He still remembered his original fancy, bizarre though it was, that she would spring upon him the moment his back was turned and land with one single crushing leap upon his neck. Of course it was nonsense, but then it haunted him, and once an idea begins to do that it ceases to be nonsense. It has clothed itself in reality.

He went upstairs accordingly. It was dusk, and the oil lamps had not yet been lit in the passages. He stumbled over the uneven surface of the ancient flooring, passing the dim outlines of doors along the corridor – doors that he had never once seen opened – rooms that seemed never occupied. He moved, as his habit now was, stealthily and on tiptoe.

Half-way down the last passage to his own chamber there was a sharp turn, and it was just here, while groping round the walls with outstretched hands, that his fingers touched something that was not wall – something that moved. It was soft and warm in texture, indescribably fragrant, and about the height of his shoulder; and he immediately thought of a furry, sweet-smelling kitten. The next minute he knew it was something quite different.

Instead of investigating, however – his nerves

must have been too overwrought for that, he said – he shrank back as closely as possibly against the wall on the other side. The thing, whatever it was, slipped past him with a sound of rustling, and retreating with light footsteps down the passage behind him, was gone. A breath of warm, scented air was wafted to his nostrils.

Vezin caught his breath for an instant and paused, stock-still, half leaning against the wall – and then almost ran down the remaining distance and entered his room with a rush, locking the door hurriedly behind him. Yet it was not fear that made him run: it was excitement, pleasurable excitement. His nerves were tingling, and a delicious glow made itself felt all over his body. In a flash it came to him that this was just what he had felt twenty-five years ago as a boy when he was in love for the first time. Warm currents of life ran all over him and mounted to his brain in a whirl of soft delight. His mood was suddenly become tender, melting, loving.

The room was quite dark, and he collapsed upon the sofa by the window, wondering what had happened to him and what it all meant. But the only thing he understood clearly in that instant was that something in him had swiftly, magically changed: he no longer wished to leave, or to argue with himself about leaving. The encounter in the passage-way had changed all that. The strange perfume of it still hung about him, bemusing his heart and mind. For he knew that it was a girl who had passed him, a girl's face that his fingers had brushed in the darkness, and he felt in some extraordinary way as though he had been actually kissed

by her, kissed full upon the lips.

Trembling, he sat upon the sofa by the window and struggled to collect his thoughts. He was utterly unable to understand how the mere passing of a girl in the darkness of a narrow passage-way could communicate so electric a thrill to his whole being that he still shook with the sweetness of it. Yet, there it was! And he found it as useless to deny as to attempt analysis. Some ancient fire had entered his veins, and now ran coursing through his blood; and that he was forty-five instead of twenty did not matter one little jot. Out of all the inner turmoil and confusion emerged the one salient fact that the mere atmosphere, the merest casual touch, of this girl, unseen, unknown in the darkness, had been sufficient to stir dormant fires in the centre of his heart, and rouse his whole being from a state of feeble sluggishness to one of tearing and tumultuous excitement.

After a time, however, the number of Vezin's years began to assert their cumulative power; he grew calmer; and when a knock came at length upon his door and he heard the waiter's voice suggesting that dinner was nearly over, he pulled himself together and slowly made his way downstairs into the dining-room.

Everyone looked up as he entered, for he was very late, but he took his customary seat in the far corner and began to eat. The trepidation was still in his nerves, but the fact that he had passed through the courtyard and hall without catching sight of a petticoat served to calm him a little. He ate so fast that he had almost caught up with the current stage of the table d'hôte, when a slight

commotion in the room drew his attention.

His chair was so placed that the door and the greater portion of the long *salle à manger* were behind him, yet it was not necessary to turn round to know that the same person he had passed in the dark passage had now come into the room. He felt the presence long before he heard or saw anyone. Then he became aware that the old men, the only other guests, were rising one by one in their places, and exchanging greetings with someone who passed among them from table to table. And when at length he turned with his heart beating furiously to ascertain for himself, he saw the form of a young girl, lithe and slim, moving down the centre of the room and making straight for his own table in the corner. She moved wonderfully, with sinuous grace, like a young panther, and her approach filled him with such delicious bewilderment that he was utterly unable to tell at first what her face was like, or discover what it was about the whole presentment of the creature that filled him anew with trepidation and delight.

'Ah, Ma'mselle est de retour!' he heard the old waiter murmur at his side, and he was just able to take in that she was the daughter of the proprietress, when she was upon him, and he heard her voice. She was addressing him. Something of red lips he saw and laughing white teeth, and stray wisps of fine dark hair about the temples; but all the rest was a dream in which his own emotion rose like a thick cloud before his eyes and prevented his seeing accurately, or knowing exactly what he did. He was aware that she greeted him with a charming little bow; that her beautiful

large eyes looked searchingly into his own; that the perfume he had noticed in the dark passage again assailed his nostrils, and that she was bending a little towards him and leaning with one hand on the table at his side. She was quite close to him – that was the chief thing he knew – explaining that she had been asking after the comfort of her mother's guests, and was now introducing herself to the latest arrival – himself.

'M'sieur has already been here a few days,' he heard the waiter say; and then her own voice, sweet as singing, replied:

'Ah, but M'sieur is not going to leave us just yet, I hope. My mother is too old to look after the comfort of our guests properly, but now I am here I will remedy all that.' She laughed deliciously. 'M'sieur shall be well looked after.'

Vezin, struggling with his emotion and desire to be polite, half rose to acknowledge the pretty speech, and to stammer some sort of reply, but as he did so his hand by chance touched her own that was resting upon the table, and a shock that was for all the world like a shock of electricity, passed from her skin into his body. His soul wavered and shook deep within him. He caught her eyes fixed upon his own with a look of most curious intentness, and the next moment he knew that he had sat down wordless again on his chair, that the girl was already half-way across the room, and that he was trying to eat his salad with a dessert-spoon and a knife.

Longing for her return, and yet dreading it, he gulped down the remainder of his dinner, and then went at once to his bedroom to be alone with his thoughts. This time the passages were lighted,

and he suffered no exciting contretemps; yet the winding corridor was dim with shadows, and the last portion, from the bend of the walls onwards, seemed longer than he had ever known it. It ran downhill like the pathway on a mountain side, and as he tiptoed softly down it he felt that by rights it ought to have led him clean out of the house into the heart of a great forest. The world was singing with him. Strange fancies filled his brain, and once in the room, with the door securely locked, he did not light the candles, but sat by the open window thinking long, long thoughts that came unbidden in troops to his mind.

IV

This part of the story he told to Dr. Silence, without special coaxing, it is true, yet with much stammering embarrassment. He could not in the least understand, he said, how the girl had managed to affect him so profoundly, and even before he had set eyes upon her. For her mere proximity in the darkness had been sufficient to set him on fire. He knew nothing of enchantments, and for years had been a stranger to anything approaching tender relations with any member of the opposite sex, for he was encased in shyness, and realised his overwhelming defects only too well. Yet this bewitching young creature came to him deliberately. Her manner was unmistakable, and she sought him out on every possible occasion. Chaste and sweet she was undoubtedly, yet frankly inviting; and she won him utterly with the first glance of her shining eyes, even if she had not already done so in the dark merely by the magic of her invisible presence.

'You felt she was altogether wholesome and good?' queried the doctor. 'You had no reaction of any sort – for instance, of alarm?'

Vezin looked up sharply with one of his inimitable little apologetic smiles. It was some time before he replied. The mere memory of the adventure had suffused his shy face with blushes, and his brown eyes sought the floor again before he answered.

'I don't think I can quite say that,' he explained presently. 'I acknowledged certain qualms, sitting up in my room afterwards. A conviction grew upon me that there was something about her – how shall I express it? – well, something unholy. It is not impurity in any sense, physical or mental, that I mean, but something quite indefinable that gave me a vague sensation of the creeps. She drew me, and at the same time repelled me, more than – than—'

He hesitated, blushing furiously, and unable to finish the sentence.

'Nothing like it has ever come to me before or since,' he concluded with lame confusion. 'I suppose it was, as you suggested, just now, something of an enchantment. At any rate, it was strong enough to make me feel that I would stay in that awful little haunted town for years if only I could see her every day, hear her voice, watch her wonderful movements; and sometimes, perhaps, touch her hand.'

'Can you explain to me what you felt was the source of her power?' John Silence asked, looking purposely anywhere but at the narrator.

'I am surprised that *you* should ask me such a

question,' answered Vezin, with the nearest approach to dignity he could manage. 'I think no man can describe to another convincingly wherein lies the magic of the woman who ensnares him. I certainly cannot. I can only say this slip of a girl bewitched me, and the mere knowledge that she was living and sleeping in the same house filled me with an extraordinary sense of delight.

'But there's one thing I can tell you,' he went on earnestly, his eyes aglow, 'namely, that she seemed to sum up and synthesise in herself all the strange hidden forces that operated so mysteriously in the town and its inhabitants. She had the silken movements of the panther, going smoothly, silently to and fro, and the same indirect, oblique methods as the townsfolk, screening, like them, secret purposes of her own – purposes that I was sure had *me* for their objective. She kept me, to my terror and delight, ceaselessly under observation, yet so carelessly, so consummately, that another man less sensitive, if I may say so' – he made a deprecating gesture – 'or less prepared by what had gone before, would never have noticed it at all. She was always still, always reposeful, yet she seemed to be everywhere at once, so that I never could escape from her. I was continually meeting the stare and laughter of her great eyes, in the corners of the rooms, in the passages, calmly looking at me through the windows, or in the busiest parts of the public streets.'

Their intimacy, it seems, grew very rapidly after this first encounter which had so violently disturbed the little man's equilibrium. He was naturally very prim, and prim folk live mostly in so

small a world that anything violently unusual may shake them clean out of it, and they therefore instinctively distrust originality. But Vezin began to forget his primness after a while. The girl was always modestly behaved, and as her mother's representative she naturally had to do with the guests in the hotel. It was not out of the way that a spirit of camaraderie should spring up. Besides, she was young, she was charmingly pretty, she was French, and – she obviously liked him.

At the same time, there was something indescribable – a certain indefinable atmosphere of other places, other times – that made him try hard to remain on his guard, and sometimes made him catch his breath with a sudden start. It was all rather like a delirious dream, half delight, half dread, he confided in a whisper to Dr. Silence; and more than once he hardly knew quite what he was doing or saying, as though he were driven forward by impulses he scarcely recognised as his own.

And though the thought of leaving presented itself again and again to his mind, it was each time with less insistence, so that he stayed on from day to day, becoming more and more a part of the sleepy life of this dreamy medieval town, losing more and more of his recognisable personality. Soon, he felt, the Curtain within would roll up with an awful rush, and he would find himself suddenly admitted into the secret purposes of the hidden life that lay behind it all. Only, by that time, he would have become transformed into an entirely different being.

And, meanwhile, he noticed various little signs of the intention to make his stay attractive to him:

flowers in his bedroom, a more comfortable armchair in the corner, and even special little extra dishes on his private table in the dining-room. Conversations, too, with 'Mademoiselle Ilsé' became more and more frequent and pleasant, and although they seldom travelled beyond the weather, or the details of the town, the girl, he noticed, was never in a hurry to bring them to an end, and often contrived to interject little odd sentences that he never properly understood, yet felt to be significant.

And it was these stray remarks, full of a meaning that evaded him, that pointed to some hidden purpose of her own and made him feel uneasy. They all had to do, he felt sure, with reasons for his staying on in the town indefinitely.

'And has M'sieur not even yet come to a decision?' she said softly in his ear, sitting beside him in the sunny yard before *déjeuner,* the acquaintance having progressed with significant rapidity. 'Because, if it's so difficult, we must all try together to help him!'

The question startled him, following upon his own thoughts. It was spoken with a pretty laugh and a stray bit of hair across one eye, as she turned and peered at him half roguishly. Possibly he did not quite understand the French of it, for her near presence always confused his small knowledge of the language distressingly. Yet the words, and her manner, and something else that lay behind it all in her mind, frightened him. It gave such point to his feeling that the town was waiting for him to make his mind up on some important matter.

At the same time her voice, and the fact that she was there so close beside him in her soft dark dress,

thrilled him inexpressibly.

'It is true I find it difficult to leave,' he stammered, losing his way deliciously in the depth of her eyes, 'and especially now that Mademoiselle Ilsé has come.'

He was surprised at the success of his sentence, and quite delighted with the little gallantry of it. But at the same time he could have bitten his tongue off for having said it.

'Then after all you like our little town, or you would not be pleased to stay on,' she said, ignoring the compliment.

'I am enchanted with it, and enchanted with you,' he cried, feeling that his tongue was somehow slipping beyond the control of his brain. And he was on the verge of saying all manner of other things of the wildest description, when the girl sprang lightly up from her chair beside him, and made to go.

'It is *soupe à l'onion* to-day!' she cried, laughing back at him through the sunlight, 'and I must go and see about it. Otherwise, you know, M'sieur will not enjoy his dinner, and then, perhaps, he will leave us!'

He watched her cross the courtyard, moving with all the grace and lightness of the feline race, and her simple black dress clothed her, he thought, exactly like the fur of the same supple species. She turned once to laugh to him from the porch with the glass door, and then stopped a moment to speak to her mother, who sat knitting as usual in her corner seat just inside the hall-way.

But how was it, then, that the moment his eye fell upon this ungainly woman, the pair of them ap-

peared suddenly as other than they were? Whence came that transforming dignity and sense of power that enveloped them both as by magic? What was it about that massive woman that made her appear instantly regal, and set her on a throne in some dark and dreadful scenery, wielding a sceptre over the red glare of some tempestuous orgy? And why did this slender stripling of a girl, graceful as a willow, lithe as a young leopard, assume suddenly an air of sinister majesty, and move with flame and smoke about her head, and the darkness of night beneath her feet?

Vezin caught his breath and sat there transfixed. Then, almost simultaneously with its appearance, the queer notion vanished again, and the sunlight of day caught them both, and he heard her laughing to her mother about the *soupe à l'onion,* and saw her glancing back at him over her dear little shoulder with a smile that made him think of a dew-kissed rose bending lightly before summer airs.

And, indeed, the onion soup was particularly excellent that day, because he saw another cover laid at his small table, and, with fluttering heart, heard the waiter murmur by way of explanation that 'Ma'mselle Ilsé would honour M'sieur to-day at *déjeuner,* as her custom sometimes is with her mother's guests.'

So actually she sat by him all through that delirious meal, talking quietly to him in easy French, seeing that he was well looked after, mixing the salad dressing, and even helping him with her own hand. And, later in the afternoon, while he was smoking in the courtyard, longing for a sight of her as soon as her duties were done, she came again to

his side, and when he rose to meet her, she stood facing him a moment, full of a perplexing sweet shyness before she spoke –

'My mother thinks you ought to know more of the beauties of our little town, and *I* think so, too! Would M'sieur like me to be his guide, perhaps? I can show him everything, for our family has lived here for many generations.'

She had him by the hand, indeed, before he could find a single word to express his pleasure, and led him, all unresisting, out into the street, yet in such a way that it seemed perfectly natural she should do so, and without the faintest suggestion of boldness or immodesty. Her face glowed with the pleasure and interest of it, and with her short dress and tumbled hair she looked every bit the charming child of seventeen that she was, innocent and playful, proud of her native town, and alive beyond her years to the sense of its ancient beauty.

So they went over the town together, and she showed him what she considered its chief interest: the tumble-down old house where her forebears had lived; the sombre, aristocratic-looking mansion where her mother's family dwelt for centuries, and the ancient market-place where several hundred years before the witches had been burnt by the score. She kept up a lively running stream of talk about it all, of which he understood not a fiftieth part as he trudged along by her side, cursing his forty-five years and feeling all the yearnings of his early manhood revive and jeer at him. And, as she talked, England and Surbiton seemed very far away indeed, almost in another age of the world's history. Her voice touched something immeasurably old in

him, something that slept deep. It lulled the surface parts of his consciousness to sleep, allowing what was far more ancient to awaken. Like the town, with its elaborate pretence of modern active life, the upper layers of his being became dulled, soothed, muffled, and what lay underneath began to stir in its sleep. That big Curtain swayed a little to and fro. Presently it might lift altogether. . . .

He began to understand a little better at last. The mood of the town was reproducing itself in him. In proportion as his ordinary external self became muffled, that inner secret life, that was far more real and vital, asserted itself. And this girl was surely the high-priestess of it all, the chief instrument of its accomplishment. New thoughts, with new interpretations, flooded his mind, as she walked beside him through the winding streets, while the picturesque old gabled town, softly coloured in the sunset, had never appeared to him so wholly wonderful and seductive.

And only one curious incident came to disturb and puzzle him, slight in itself, but utterly inexplicable, bringing white terror into the child's face and a scream to her laughing lips. He had merely pointed to a column of blue smoke that rose from the burning autumn leaves and made a picture against the red roofs, and had then run to the wall and called her to his side to watch the flames shooting here and there through the heap of rubbish. Yet, at the sight of it, as though taken by surprise, her face had altered dreadfully, and she had turned and run like the wind, calling out wild sentences to him as she ran, of which he had not understood a single word except that the fire apparently fright-

ened her, and she wanted to get quickly away from it, and to get him away, too.

Yet five minutes later she was as calm and happy again as though nothing had happened to alarm or waken troubled thoughts in her, and they had both forgotten the incident.

They were leaning over the ruined ramparts together, listening to the weird music of the band as he had heard it the first day of his arrival. It moved him again profoundly as it had done before, and somehow he managed to find his tongue and his best French. The girl leaned across the stones close beside him. No one was about. Driven by some remorseless engine within he began to stammer something – he hardly knew what – of his strange admiration for her. Almost at the first word she sprang lightly off the wall and came up smiling in front of him, just touching his knees as he sat there. She was hatless as usual, and the sun caught her hair and one side of her cheek and throat.

'Oh, I'm *so* glad!' she cried, clapping her little hands softly in his face, 'so very glad, because that means that if you like me you must also like what I do, and what I belong to.'

Already he regretted bitterly having lost control of himself. Something in the phrasing of her sentence chilled him. He knew the fear of embarking upon an unknown and dangerous sea.

'You will take part in our real life, I mean,' she added softly, with an indescribable coaxing of manner, as though she noticed his shrinking. 'You will come back to us.'

Already this slip of a child seemed to dominate him; he felt her power coming over him more and

more; something emanated from her that stole over his senses and made him aware that her personality, for all its simple grace, held forces that were stately, imposing, august. He saw her again moving through smoke and flame amid broken and tempestuous scenery alarmingly strong, her terrible mother by her side. Dimly this shone through her smile and appearance of charming innocence.

'You will, I know,' she repeated, holding him with her eyes.

They were quite alone up there on the ramparts, and the sensation that she was overmastering him stirred a wild sensuousness in his blood. The mingled abandon and reserve in her attracted him furiously, and all of him that was man rose up and resisted the creeping influence, at the same time acclaiming it with the full delight of his forgotten youth. An irresistible desire came to him to question her, to summon what still remained to him of his own little personality in an effort to retain the right to his normal self.

The girl had grown quiet again, and was now leaning on the broad wall close beside him, gazing out across the darkening plain, her elbows on the coping, motionless as a figure carved in stone. He took his courage in both hands.

'Tell me, Ilsé,' he said, unconsciously imitating her own purring softness of voice, yet aware that he was utterly in earnest, 'what is the meaning of this town, and what is this real life you speak of? And why is it that the people watch me from morning to night? Tell me what it all means? And, tell me,' he added more quickly with passion in his voice, 'what you really are – yourself?'

She turned her head and looked at him through half-closed eyelids, her growing inner excitement betraying itself by the faint colour that ran like a shadow across her face.

'It seems to me,' – he faltered oddly under her gaze – 'that I have some right to know —'

Suddenly she opened her eyes to the full. 'You love me, then?' she asked softly.

'I swear,' he cried impetuously, moved as by the force of a rising tide, 'I never felt before – I have never known any other girl who —'

'Then you *have* the right to know,' she calmly interrupted his confused confession; 'for love shares all secrets.'

She paused, and a thrill like fire ran swiftly through him. Her words lifted him off the earth, and he felt a radiant happiness, followed almost the same instant in horrible contrast by the thought of death. He became aware that she had turned her eyes upon his own and was speaking again.

'The real life I speak of,' she whispered, 'is the old, old life within, the life of long ago, the life to which you, too, once belonged, and to which you still belong.'

A faint wave of memory troubled the deeps of his soul as her low voice sank into him. What she was saying he knew instinctively to be true, even though he could not as yet understand its full purport. His present life seemed slipping from him as he listened, merging his personality in one that was far older and greater. It was this loss of his present self that brought to him the thought of death.

'You came here,' she want on, 'with the purpose of seeking it, and the people felt your presence and

are waiting to know what you decide, whether you will leave them without having found it, or whether—'

Her eyes remained fixed upon his own, but her face began to change, growing larger and darker with an expression of age.

'It is their thoughts constantly playing about your soul that makes you feel they watch you. They do not watch you with their eyes. The purposes of their inner life are calling to you, seeking to claim you. You were all part of the same life long, long ago, and now they want you back again among them.'

Vezin's timid heart sank with dread as he listened; but the girl's eyes held him with a net of joy so that he had no wish to escape. She fascinated him, as it were, clean cut of his normal self.

'Alone, however, the people could never have caught and held you,' she resumed. 'The motive force was not strong enough; it has faded through all these years. But I' – she paused a moment and looked at him with complete confidence in her splendid eyes – 'I possess the spell to conquer you and hold you: the spell of old love. I can win you back again and make you live the old life with me, for the force of the ancient tie between us, if I choose to use it, is irresistible. And I do choose to use it. I still want you. And you, dear soul of my dim past' – she pressed closer to him so that her breath passed across his eyes, and her voice positively sang – 'I mean to have you, for you love me and are utterly at my mercy.'

Vezin heard, and yet did not hear; understood, yet did not understand. He had passed into a condition

of exaltation. The world was beneath his feet, made of music and flowers, and he was flying somewhere far above it through the sunshine of pure delight. He was breathless and giddy with the wonder of her words. They intoxicated him. And, still, the terror of it all, the dreadful thought of death, pressed ever behind her sentences. For flames shot through her voice out of black smoke and licked at his soul.

And they communicated with one another, it seemed to him, by a process of swift telepathy, for his French could never have compassed all he said to her. Yet she understood perfectly, and what she said to him was like the recital of verses long since known. And the mingled pain and sweetness of it as he listened were almost more than his little soul could hold.

'Yet I came here wholly by chance —' he heard himself saying.

'No,' she cried with passion, 'you came here because I called to you. I have called to you for years, and you came with the whole force of the past behind you. You had to come, for I own you, and I claim you.'

She rose again and moved closer, looking at him with a certain insolence in the face – the insolence of power.

The sun had set behind the towers of the old cathedral and the darknes rose up from the plain and enveloped them. The music of the band had ceased. The leaves of the plane trees hung motionless, but the chill of the autumn evening rose about them and made Vezin shiver. There was no sound but the sound of their voices and the occasional soft rustle of the girl's dress. He could hear the blood

rushing in his ears. He scarcely realized where he was or what he was doing. Some terrible magic of the imagination drew him deeply down into the tombs of his own being, telling him in no unfaltering voice that her words shadowed forth the truth. And this simple little French maid, speaking beside him with so strange authority, he saw curiously alter into quite another being. As he stared into her eyes, the picture in his mind grew and lived, dressing itself vividly to his inner vision with a degree of reality he was compelled to acknowledge. As once before, he saw her tall and stately, moving through wild and broken scenery of forests and mountain caverns, the glare of flames behind her head and clouds of shifting smoke about her feet. Dark leaves encircled her hair, flying loosely in the wind, and her limbs shone through the merest rags of clothing. Others were about her, too, and ardent eyes on all sides cast delirious glances upon her, but her own eyes were always for One only, one whom she held by the hand. For she was leading the dance in some tempestuous orgy to the music of chanting voices, and the dance she led circled about a great and awful Figure on a throne, brooding over the scene through lurid vapours, while innumerable other wild faces and forms crowded furiously about her in the dance. But the one she held by the hand he knew to be himself, and the monstrous shape upon the throne he knew to be her mother.

The vision rose within him, rushing to him down the long years of buried time, crying aloud to him with the voice of memory reawakened. And then the scene faded away, and he saw the clear circle of the girl's eyes gazing steadfastly into his

own, and she became once more the pretty little daughter of the innkeeper, and he found his voice again.

'And you,' he whispered tremblingly – 'you child of visions and enchantment, how is it that you so bewitch me that I loved you even before I saw?'

She drew herself up beside him with an air of rare dignity.

'The call of the Past,' she said; 'and besides,' she added proudly, 'in the real life I am a princess —'

'A princess!' he cried.

'— and my mother is a queen!'

At this, little Vezin utterly lost his head. Delight tore at his heart and swept him into sheer ecstasy. To hear that sweet singing voice, and to see those adorable little lips utter such things, upset his balance beyond all hope of control. He took her in his arms and covered her unresisting face with kisses.

But even while he did so, and while the hot passion swept him, he felt that she was soft and loathsome, and that her answering kisses stained his very soul. . . . And when, presently, she had freed herself and vanished into the darkness, he stood there, leaning against the wall in a state of collapse, creeping with horror from the touch of her yielding body, and inwardly raging at the weakness that he already dimly realized must prove his undoing.

And from the shadows of the old buildings into which she disappeared there rose in the stillness of the night a singular, long-drawn cry, which at first he took for laughter, but which later he was sure he recognized as the almost human wailing of a cat.

V

For a long time Vezin leant there against the wall, alone with his surging thoughts and emotions. He understood at length that he had done the one thing necessary to call down upon him the whole force of this ancient Past. For in those passionate kisses he had acknowledged the tie of olden days, and had revived it. And the memory of that soft impalpable caress in the darkness of the inn corridor came back to him with a shudder. The girl had first mastered him, and then led him to the one act that was necessary for her purpose. He had been waylaid, after the lapse of centuries – caught, and conquered.

Dimly he realized this, and sought to make plans for his escape. But, for the moment at any rate, he was powerless to manage his thoughts or will, for the sweet, fantastic madness of the whole adventure mounted to his brain like a spell, and he gloried in the feeling that he was utterly exhausted and moving in a world so much larger and wilder than the one he had ever been accustomed to.

The moon, pale and enormous, was just rising over the sea-like plain, when at last he rose to go. Her slanting rays drew all the houses into new perspective, so that their roofs, already glistening with dew, seemed to stretch much higher into the sky than usual, and their gables and quaint old towers lay far away in its purple reaches.

The cathedral appeared unreal in a silver mist. He moved softly, keeping to the shadows; but the streets were all deserted and very silent; the doors were closed, the shutters fastened. Not a soul was astir. The hush of night lay over everything; it was

like a town of the dead, a churchyard with gigantic and grotesque tombstones.

Wondering where all the busy life of the day had so utterly disappeared, he made his way to a back door that entered the inn by means of the stables, thinking thus to reach his room unobserved. He reached the courtyard safely and crossed it by keeping close to the shadow of the wall. He sidled down it, mincing along on tiptoe, just as the old men did when they entered the *salle à manger*. He was horrified to find himself doing this instinctively. A strange impulse came to him, catching him somehow in the centre of his body – an impulse to drop upon all fours and run swiftly and silently. He glanced upwards and the idea came to him to leap up upon his window-sill overhead instead of going round by the stairs. This occurred to him as the easiest and most natural way. It was like the beginning of some horrible transformation of himself into something else. He was fearfully strung up.

The moon was higher now, and the shadows very dark along the side of the street where he moved. He kept among the deepest of them, and reached the porch with the glass doors.

But here there was light; the inmates, unfortunately, were still about. Hoping to slip across the hall unobserved, and reach the stairs, he opened the door carefully and stole in. Then he saw that the hall was not empty. A large dark thing lay against the wall on his left. At first he thought it must be household articles. Then it moved, and he thought it was an immense cat, distorted in some way by the play of light and shadow. Then it rose straight up before him and he saw that it was the

proprietress.

What she had been doing in this position he could only venture a dreadful guess, but the moment she stood up and faced him he was aware of some terrible dignity clothing her about that instantly recalled the girl's strange saying that she was a queen. Huge and sinister she stood there under the little oil lamp; alone with him in the empty hall. Awe stirred in his heart, and the roots of some ancient fear. He felt that he must bow to her and make some kind of obeisance. The impulse was fierce and irresistible, as of long habit. He glanced quickly about him. There was no one there. Then he deliberately inclined his head towards her. He bowed.

'Enfin! M'sieur s'est donc décidé. C'est bien alors. J'en suis contente.'

Her words came to him sonorously as through a great open space.

The the great figure came suddenly across the flagged hall at him and seized his trembling hands. Some overpowering force moved with her and caught him.

'On pourrait faire un p'tit tour ensemble, n'est-ce pas? Nous y allons cette nuit et il faut s'exercer un peu d'avance pour cela. Ilsé, Ilsé, viens donc ici. Viens vite!'

And she whirled him round in the opening steps of some dance that seemed oddly and horribly familiar. They made no sound on the stones, this strangely assorted couple. It was all soft and stealthy. And presently, when the air seemed to thicken like smoke, and a red glare as of flame shot through it, he was aware that some one else had joined them

and that his hand the mother had released was now tightly held by the daughter. Ilsé had come in answer to the call, and he saw her with leaves of vervain twined in her dark hair, clothed in tattered vestiges of some curious garment, beautiful as the night, and horribly, odiously, loathsomely seductive.

'To the Sabbath! to the Sabbath!' they cried. 'On to the Witches' Sabbath!'

Up and down that narrow hall they danced, the women on each side of him, to the wildest measure he had ever imagined, yet which he dimly, dreadfully remembered, till the lamp on the wall flickered and went out, and they were left in total darkness. And the devil woke in his heart with a thousand vile suggestions and made him afraid.

Suddenly they released his hands and he heard the voice of the mother cry that it was time, and they must go. Which way they went he did not pause to see. He only realized that he was free, and he blundered through the darkness till he found the stairs and then tore up them to his room as though all hell was at his heels.

He flung himself on the sofa, with his face in his hands, and groaned. Swiftly reviewing a dozen ways of immediate escape, all equally impossible, he finally decided that the only thing to do for the moment was to sit quiet and wait. He must see what was going to happen. At least in the privacy of his own bedroom he would be fairly safe. The door was locked. He crossed over and softly opened the window which gave upon the courtyard and also permitted a partial view of the hall through the glass doors.

As he did so the hum and murmur of a great activity reached his ears from the streets beyond – the sound of footsteps and voices muffled by distance. He leaned out cautiously and listened. The moonlight was clear and strong now, but his own window was in shadow, the silver disc being still behind the house. It came to him irresistibly that the inhabitants of the town, who a little while before had all been invisible behind closed doors, were now issuing forth, busy upon some secret and unholy errand. He listened intently.

At first everything about him was silent, but soon he became aware of movements going on in the house itself. Rustlings and cheepings came to him across that still, moonlit yard. A concourse of living beings sent the hum of their activity into the night. Things were on the move everywhere. A biting, pungent odour rose through the air, coming he knew not whence. Presently his eyes became glued to the windows of the opposite wall where the moonshine fell in a soft blaze. The roof overhead, and behind him, was reflected clearly in the panes of glass, and he saw the outlines of dark bodies moving with long footsteps over the tiles and along the coping. They passed swiftly and silently, shaped like immense cats, in an endless procession across the pictured glass, and then appeared to leap down to a lower level where he lost sight of them. He just caught the soft thudding of their leaps. Sometimes their shadows fell upon the white wall opposite, and then he could not make out whether they were the shadows of human beings or of cats. They seemed to change swiftly from one to the other. The transformation looked horribly real, for they

leaped like human beings, yet changed swiftly in the air immediately afterwards, and dropped like animals.

The yard, too, beneath him, was now alive with the creeping movements of dark forms all stealthily drawing towards the porch with the glass doors. They kept so closely to the wall that he could not determine their actual shape, but when he saw that they passed on to the great congregation that was gathering in the hall, he understood that these were the creatures whose leaping shadows he had first seen reflected in the window-panes opposite. They were coming from all parts of the town, reaching the appointed meeting-place across the roofs and tiles, and springing from level to level till they came to the yard.

Then a new sound caught his ear, and he saw that the windows all about him were being softly opened, and that to each window came a face. A moment later figures began dropping hurriedly down into the yard. And these figures, as they lowered themselves down from the windows, were human, he saw; but once safely in the yard they fell upon all fours and changed in the swiftest possible second into – cats – huge, silent cats. They ran in streams to join the main body in the hall beyond.

So, after all, the rooms in the house had not been empty and unoccupied.

Moreover, what he saw no longer filled him with amazement. For he remembered it all. It was familiar. It had all happened before just so, hundreds of times, and he himself had taken part in it and known the wild madness of it all. The outline

of the old building changed, the yard grew larger, and he seemed to be staring down upon it from a much greater height through smoky vapours. And, as he looked, half remembering, the old pains of long ago, fierce and sweet, furiously assailed him, and the blood stirred horribly as he heard the Call of the Dance again in his heart and tasted the ancient magic of Ilsé whirling by his side.

Suddenly he started back. A great lithe cat had leaped softly up from the shadows below on to the sill close to his face, and was staring fixedly at him with the eyes of a human. 'Come,' it seemed to say, 'come with us to the Dance! Change as of old! Transform yourself swiftly and come!' Only too well he understood the creature's soundless call.

It was gone again in a flash, with scarcely a sound of its padded feet on the stones, and then others dropped by the score down the side of the house, past his very eyes, all changing as they fell and darting away rapidly, softly, towards the gathering point. And again he felt the dreadful desire to do likewise; to murmur the old incantation, and then drop upon hands and knees and run swiftly for the great flying leap into the air. Oh, how the passion of it rose within him like a flood, twisting his very entrails, sending his heart's desire flaming forth into the night for the old, old Dance of the Sorcerers at the Witches' Sabbath! The whirl of the stars was about him; once more he met the magic of the moon. The power of the wind, rushing from precipice and forest, leaping from cliff to cliff across the valleys, tore him away. . . . He heard the cries of the dancers and their wild laughter, and with this savage girl in his embrace he danced

furiously about the dim Throne where sate the Figure with the sceptre of majesty. . . .

Then, suddenly, all became hushed and still, and the fever died down a little in his heart. The calm moonlight flooded a courtyard empty and deserted. They had started. The procession was off into the sky. And he was left behind – alone.

Vezin tiptoed softly across the room and unlocked the door. The murmur from the streets, growing momentarily as he advanced, met his ears. He made his way with the utmost caution down the corridor. At the head of the stairs he paused and listened. Below him, the hall where they had gathered was dark and still, but through opened doors and windows on the far side of the building came the sound of a great throng moving farther and farther into the distance.

He made his way down the creaking wooden stair, dreading yet longing to meet some straggler who should point the way, but finding no one; across the dark hall, so lately thronged with living, moving things, and out through the opened front doors into the street. He could not believe that he was really left behind, really forgotten, that he had been purposely permitted to escape. It perplexed him.

Nervously he peered about him, and up and down the street; then, seeing nothing, advanced slowly down the pavement.

The whole town, as he went, showed itself empty and deserted, as though a great wind had blown everything alive out of it. The doors and windows of the houses stood open to the night; nothing stirred; moonlight and silence lay over all. The

night lay about him like a cloak. The air, soft and cool, caressed his cheek like the touch of a great furry paw. He gained confidence and began to walk quickly, though still keeping to the shadowed side. Nowhere could he discover the faintest sign of the great unholy exodus he knew had just taken place. The moon sailed high over all in a sky, cloudless and serene.

Hardly realizing where he was going, he crossed the open market-place and so came to the ramparts, whence he knew a pathway descended to the high road and along which he could make good his escape to one of the other little towns that lay to the northward, and so to the railway.

But first he paused and gazed out over the scene at his feet where the great plain lay like a silver map of some dream country. The still beauty of it entered his heart, increasing his sense of bewilderment and unreality. No air stirred, the leaves of the plane trees stood motionless, the near details were defined with the sharpness of day against dark shadows and in the distance the fields and woods melted away into haze and shimmering mistiness.

But the breath caught in his throat and he stood stock-still as though transfixed when his gaze passed from the horizon and fell upon the near prospect in the depth of the valley at his feet. The whole lower slopes of the hill, that lay hid from the brightness of the moon, were aglow, and through the glare he saw countless moving forms, shifting thick and fast between the openings of the trees; while overhead, like leaves driven by the wind, he discerned flying shapes that hovered darkly one moment against the sky and then settled down with

cries and weird singing through the branches into the region that was aflame.

Spellbound, he stood and stared for a time that he could not measure. And then, moved by one of the terrible impulses that seemed to control the whole adventure, he climbed swiftly upon the top of the broad coping, and balanced a moment where the valley gaped at his feet. But in that very instant, as he stood hovering, a sudden movement among the shadows of the houses caught his eye, and he turned to see the outline of a large animal dart swiftly across the open space behind him, and land with a flying leap upon the top of the wall a little lower down. It ran like the wind to his feet and then rose up beside him upon the ramparts. A shiver seemed to run through the moonlight, and his sight trembled for a second. His heart pulsed fearfully. Ilsé stood beside him, peering into his face.

Some dark substance, he saw, stained the girl's face and skin, shining in the moonlight as she stretched her hands towards him; she was dressed in wretched tattered garments that yet became her mightily; rue and vervain twined about her temples; her eyes glittered with unholy light. He only just controlled the wild impulse to take her in his arms and leap with her from their giddy perch into the valley below.

'See!' she cried, pointing with an arm on which the rags fluttered in the rising wind towards the forest aglow in the distance. 'See where they await us! The woods are alive! Already the Great Ones are there, and the dance will soon begin; The salve is here! Anoint yourself and come!'

Though a moment before the sky was clear and

cloudless, yet even while she spoke the face of the moon grew dark and the wind began to toss in the crests of the plane trees at his feet. Stray gusts brought the sounds of hoarse singing and crying from the lower slopes of the hill, and the pungent odour he had already noticed about the courtyard of the inn rose about him in the air.

'Transform, transform!' she cried again, her voice rising like a song. 'Rub well your skin before you fly. Come! Come with me to the Sabbath, to the madness of its furious delight, to the sweet abandonment of its evil worship! See! the Great Ones are there, and the terrible Sacraments prepared. The Throne is occupied. Anoint and come! Anoint and come!'

She grew to the height of a tree beside him, leaping upon the wall with flaming eyes and hair strewn upon the night. He too began to change swiftly. Her hands touched the skin of his face and neck, streaking him with the burning salve that sent the old magic into his blood with the power before which fades all that is good.

A wild roar came up to his ears from the heart of the wood, and the girl, when she heard it, leaped upon the wall in the frenzy of her wicked joy.

'Satan is there!' she screamed, rushing upon him and striving to draw him with her to the edge of the wall. 'Satan has come! The Sacraments call us! Come, with your dear apostate soul, and we will worship and dance till the moon dies and the world is forgotten!'

Just saving himself from the dreadful plunge, Vezin struggled to release himself from her grasp, while the passion tore at his reins and all but

mastered him. He shrieked aloud, not knowing what he said, and then he shrieked again. It was the old impulses, the old awful habits instinctively finding voice; for though it seemed to him that he merely shrieked nonsense, the words he uttered really had meaning in them, and were intelligible. It was the ancient call. And it was heard below. It was answered.

The wind whistled at the skirts of his coat as the air round him darkened with many flying forms crowding upwards out of the valley. The crying of hoarse voices smote upon his ears, coming closer. Strokes of wind buffeted him, tearing his this way and that along the crumbling top of the stone wall; and Ilsé clung to him with her long shining arms, smooth and bare, holding him fast about the neck. But not Ilsé alone, for a dozen of them surrounded him, dropping out of the air. The pungent odour of the anointed bodies stifled him, exciting him to the old madness of the Sabbath, the dance of the witches and sorcerers doing honour to the personified Evil of the world.

'Anoint and away! Anoint and away!' they cried in wild chorus about him. 'To the Dance that never dies! To the sweet and fearful fantasy of evil!'

Another moment and he would have yielded and gone, for his will turned soft and the flood of passionate memory all but overwhelmed him, when – so can a small thing alter the whole course of an adventure – he caught his foot upon a loose stone in the edge of the wall, and then fell with a sudden crash on to the ground below. But he fell towards the houses, in the open space of dust and cobble

stones, and fortunately not into the gaping depth of the valley on the farther side.

And they, too, came in a tumbling heap about him, like flies upon a piece of food, but as they fell he was released for a moment from the power of their touch, and in that brief instant of freedom there flashed into his mind the sudden intuition that saved him. Before he could regain his feet he saw them scrabbling awkwardly back upon the wall, as though bat-like they could only fly by dropping from a height and had no hold upon him in the open. Then, seeing them perched there in a row like cats upon a roof, all dark and singularly shapeless, their eyes like lamps, the sudden memory came back to him of Ilsé's terror at the sight of fire.

Quick as a flash he found his matches and lit the dead leaves that lay under the wall.

Dry and withered, they caught fire at once, and the wind carried the flame in a long line down the length of the wall licking upwards as it ran; and with shrieks and wailings, the crowded row of forms upon the top melted away into the air on the other side, and were gone with a great rush and whirring of their bodies down into the heart of the haunted valley, leaving Vezin breathless and shaken in the middle of the deserted ground.

'Ilsé!' he called feebly; Ilsé!' for his heart ached to think that she was really gone to the great Dance without him, and that he had lost the opportunity of its fearful joy. Yet at the same time his relief was so great, and he was so dazed and troubled in mind with the whole thing, that he hardly knew what he was saying, and only cried aloud in the fierce storm of his emotion. . . .

The fire under the wall ran its course, and the moonlight came out again, soft and clear, from its temporary eclipse. With one last shuddering look at the ruined ramparts, and a feeling of horrid wonder for the haunted valley beyond, where the shapes still crowded and flew, he turned his face towards the town and slowly made his way in the direction of the hotel.

And as he went, a great wailing of cries, and a sound of howling, followed him from the gleaming forest below, growing fainter and fainter with the bursts of wind as he disappeared between the houses.

VI

'It may seem rather abrupt to you, this sudden tame ending,' said Arthur Vezin, glancing with flushed face and timid eyes at Dr. Silence sitting there with his notebook, 'but the fact is – er – from that moment my memory seems to have failed rather. I have no distinct recollection of how I got home or what precisely I did.

'It appears I never went back to the inn at all. I only dimly recollect racing down a long white road in the moonlight, past woods and villages, still and deserted, and then the dawn came up, and I saw the towers of a biggish town and so came to a station.

'But, long before that, I remember pausing somewhere on the road and looking back to where the hill-town of my adventure stood up in the moonlight, and thinking how exactly like a great monstrous cat it lay there upon the plain, its huge front paws lying down the two main streets, and the twin and broken towers of the cathedral marking

its torn ears against the sky. That picture stays in my mind with the utmost vividness to this day.

'Another thing remains in my mind from that escape – namely, the sudden sharp reminder that I had not paid my bill, and the decision I made, standing there on the dusty highroad, that the small baggage I had left behind would more than settle for my indebtedness.

'For the rest, I can only tell you that I got coffee and bread at a café on the outskirts of this town I had come to, and soon after found my way to the station and caught a train later in the day. That same evening I reached London.'

'And how long altogether,' asked John Silence quietly, 'do you think you stayed in the town of the adventure?'

Vezin looked up sheepishly.

'I was coming to that,' he resumed, with apologetic wrigglings of his body. 'In London I found that I was a whole week out in my reckoning of time. I had stayed over a week in the town, and it ought to have been September 15th, – instead of which it was only September 10th!'

'So that, in reality, you had only stayed a night or two at the inn?' queried the doctor.

Vezin hesitated before replying. He shuffled upon the mat.

'I must have gained time somewhere,' he said at length – 'somewhere or somehow. I certainly had a week to my credit. I can't explain it. I can only give you the fact.'

'And this happened to you last year, since when you have never been back to the place?'

'Last autumn, yes,' murmured Vezin; 'and I have

never dared to go back. I think I never want to.'

'And, tell me,' asked Dr. Silence at length, when he saw that the little man had evidently come to the end of his words and had nothing more to say, 'had you ever read up the subject of the old witchcraft practices during the Middle Ages, or been at all interested in the subject?'

'Never!' declared Vezin emphatically. 'I had never given a thought to such matters as far as I know —'

'Or to the question of reincarnation, perhaps?'

'Never – before my adventure; but I have since,' he replied significantly.

There was, however, something still on the man's mind that he wished to relieve himself of by confession, yet could with difficulty bring himself to mention; and it was only after the sympathetic tactfulness of the doctor had provided numerous openings that he at length availed himself of one of them, and stammered that he would like to show him the marks he still had on his neck where, he said, the girl had touched him with her anointed hands.

He took off his collar after infinite fumbling hesitation, and lowered his shirt a little for the doctor to see. And there, on the surface of the skin, lay a faint reddish line across the shoulder and extending a little way down the back towards the spine. It certainly indicated exactly the position an arm might have taken in the act of embracing. And on the other side of the neck, slightly higher up, was a similar mark, though not quite so clearly defined.

'That was where she held me that night on the ramparts,' he whispered, a strange light coming and going in his eyes.

It was some weeks later when I again found occasion to consult John Silence concerning another extraordinary case that had come under my notice, and we fell to discussing Vezin's story. Since hearing it, the doctor had made investigations on his own account, and one of his secretaries had discovered that Vezin's ancestors had actually lived for generations in the very town where the adventure came to him. Two of them, both women, had been tried and convicted as witches, and had been burned alive at the stake. Moreover, it had not been difficult to prove that very inn where Vezin stayed was built about 1700 upon the spot where the funeral pyres stood and the executions took place. The town was a sort of headquarters for all the sorcerers and witches of the entire region, and after conviction they were burnt there literally by scores.

'It seems strange,' continued the doctor, 'that Vezin should have remained ignorant of all this; but, on the other hand, it was not the kind of history that successive generations would have been anxious to keep alive, or to repeat to their children. Therefore I am inclined to think he still knows nothing about it.

'The whole adventure seems to have been a very vivid revival of the memories of an earlier life, caused by coming directly into contact with the living forces still intense enough to hang about the place, and, by a most singular chance too, with the very souls who had taken part with him in the events of that particular life. For the mother and daughter who impressed him so strangely must have been leading actors, with himself, in the scenes and

practices of witchcraft which at that period dominated the imaginations of the whole country.

'One has only to read the histories of the times to know that these witches claimed the power of transforming themselves into various animals, both for the purposes of disguise and also to convey themselves swiftly to the scenes of their imaginary orgies. Lycanthropy, or the power to change themselves into wolves, was everywhere believed in, and the ability to transform themselves into cats by rubbing their bodies with a special salve or ointment provided by Satan himself, found equal credence. The witchcraft trials abound in evidence of such universal beliefs.'

Dr. Silence quoted chapter and verse from many writers on the subject, and showed how every detail of Vezin's adventure had a basis in the practices of those dark days.

'But that the entire affair took place subjectively in the man's own consciousness, I have no doubt,' he went on, in reply to my questions; 'for my secretary who has been to the town to investigate, discovered his signature in the visitors' book, and proved by it that he had arrived on September 8th, and left suddenly without paying his bill. He left two days later, and they still were in possession of his dirty brown bag and some tourist clothes. I paid a few francs in settlement of his debt, and have sent his luggage on to him. The daughter was absent from home, but the proprietress, a large woman very much as he described her, told my secretary that he had seemed a very strange, absent-minded kind of gentleman, and after his disappearance she had feared for a long time that he had met

with a violent end in the neighbouring forest where he used to roam about alone.

'I should like to have obtained a personal interview with the daughter so as to ascertain how much was subjective and how much actually took place with her as Vezin told it. For her dread of fire and the sight of burning must, of course, have been the intuitive memory of her former painful death at the stake, and have thus explained why he fancied more than once that he saw her through smoke and flame.'

'And that mark on his skin, for instance?' I inquired.

'Merely the marks produced by hysterical brooding,' he replied, 'like the stigmata of the *religieuses,* and the bruises which appear on the bodies of hypnotised subjects who have been told to expect them. This is very common and easily explained. Only it seems curious that these marks should have remained so long in Vezin's case. Usually they disappear quickly.'

'Obviously he is still thinking about it all, brooding and living it all over again,' I ventured.

'Probably. And this makes me fear that the end of his trouble is not yet. We shall hear of him again. It is a case, alas! I can do little to alleviate.'

Dr. Silence spoke gravely and with sadness in his voice.

'And what do you make of the Frenchman in the train?' I asked further – 'the man who warned him against the place, *à cause du sommeil et à cause des chats*? Surely a very singular incident?'

' A very singular incident indeed,' he made answer slowly, 'and one I can only explain on the basis of

a highly improbable coincidence—'

'Namely?'

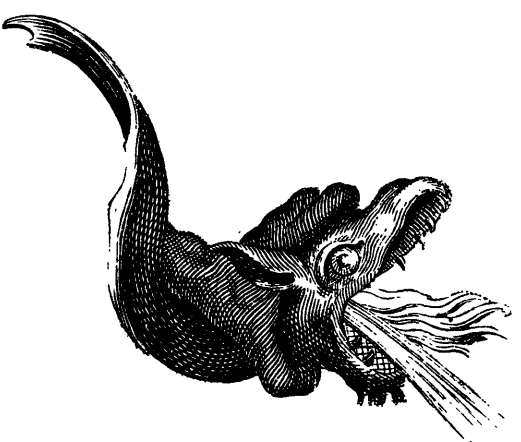
'That the man was one who had himself stayed in the town and undergone there a similar experience. I should like to find this man and ask him. But the crystal is useless here, for I have no slightest clue to go upon, and I can only conclude that some singular psychic affinity, some force still active in his being out of the same past life, drew him thus to the personality of Vezin, and enabled him to fear what might happen to him, and thus to warn him as he did.

'Yes,' he presently continued, half talking to himself, 'I suspect in this case that Vezin was swept into the vortex of forces arising out of the intense activities of a past life, and that he lived over again a scene in which he had often played a leading part centuries before. For strong actions set up forces that are so slow to exhaust themselves, they may be said in a sense never to die. In this case they were not vital enough to render the illusion complete, so that the little man found himself caught in a very distressing confusion of the present and the past; yet he was sufficiently sensitive to recognise that it was true, and to fight against the degradation of returning, even in memory, to a former and lower state of development.

'Ah yes!' he continued, crossing the floor to gaze at the darkening sky, and seemingly quite oblivious of my presence, 'subliminal up-rushes of memory like this can be exceedingly painful, and sometimes exceedingly dangerous. I only trust that this gentle soul may soon escape from this obsession of a passionate and tempestuous past. But I doubt it, I

doubt it.'

His voice was hushed with sadness as he spoke, and when he turned back into the room again there was an expression of profound yearning upon his face, the yearning of a soul whose desire to help is sometimes greater than his power.



THE WITCH WOOD

BY JOHN BUCHAN

WHAT THE MOON SAW

There was great heat at the end of July—sultry, thunderous weather, when the hills drowsed under a haze and the sun's beams seemed to be the more torrid for the screen of vapour through which they fell. The heavens were banking up for the Lammas rains. But each evening the skies cleared, and the night was an amethyst dome sprinkled with stars.

David made a great to-do about his visit to Newbiggin. On the Monday morning he announced it to Isobel, and in an hour the word had gone through the village. His housekeeper seemed to receive the news with relief. 'Blithe I am to hear it, sir. Folk suld whiles change their ground like bestial, and ye've been ower lang tethered to this parochine. Newbiggin will be a caller bit in this lown weather, and while ye're awa' I'll get your chamber cleaned and the stairs washed doun. Dinna haste to come back, for I'll no look for ye or Setterday.'

He set off on the Tuesday after midday, and there were many eyes in Woodilee to mark his going. That night he duly slept at Newbiggin, but the next day, which was Lammas Eve, he left his cousin's house and rode up Clyde water into the farthest moors. It was a wide circuit, which brought him in the afternoon to the uplands which separate Rood from Annan. All day he had been out of sight of human dwelling, and the first he saw was in the dusk, when he descended upon the tower of Calidon by the glen of the Calidon burn. At Calidon he left his horse with the grieve, promising to return for it on the morrow, and, with one look at the lit windows of the tower, he set out on foot to ford the Rood. About nine o'clock in the mulberry gloaming he reached the cottage of the Greenshiel.

Three figures greeted him there. One was the herd of the outer hirsel, Richie Smail; another was Rab Prentice, the herd of the home hirsel, who sat on the turf deas at the cottage-end with his crutch beside him; the third was Reiverslaw himself, who was also seated, smoking a pipe of tobacco.

'Ye're in braw time, Mr. Sempill,' said the last. 'Did ye pass ony folk on the road?'

'I have seen no man since the morning, except the Calidon grieve half an hour syne.'

'And that's just as weel. Richie, kindle the cruisie, for our job is better done indoors.'

The feeble light in the hut revealed a curious assembly. The two shepherds had faces of portentous gravity, and their twitching mouths and restless eyes were proof of an extreme discomfort. Reiverslaw wore his usual frieze small-clothes and

boot-hose, but he had no coat, though he had slung on his arm what might have been that garment. He flung this on the settle. ' It's ower het to wear that muckle maud till the time comes. We maun get to business, Mr. Sempill, for you should be on the road afore the moon rises. We're here to get our plan strauchtit oot and there's jimp* time. Rab Prentice, ye've been twice wi' me to Chasehope in the last se'en days. Ye mind the braw red cock the wife has gotten? '

' Fine,' said the shepherd.

' There no sic another fowl in the country-side? '

' That I'll engage.'

' Therefore if I show ye the morn a pluckin' o' red feathers, ye'll jalouse it's the Chasehope cock? '

' Ay. But I'm no gaun intil the Wud . . . not even in braid daylicht.'

' If I bid ye, ye'll gang, Rab Prentice, though I suld carry ye myself. . . . Now, secondly, as the ministers say. Do ye see this bottle? Smell it, a' three of ye. That's a smell ye never fand afore? It's what they call oil of hennyseed, and I got it frae a horse-doctor at Carlisle. I'll wager there's no anither phial o' the same between here and Embro. It's a smell ye'll no sune forget. Pit a dab on yer sleeves to remind ye o't. If the three o' us gangs to Chasehope the morn and finds Chasehope's breeks and Chasehope's sark stinkin' o' this oil, ye'll be able to swear to it, and to swear that I showed it you this verra nicht and that ye kenned the smell when ye fand it again.'

The two men agreed, sniffing the drop on their sleeve.

* Scarcely.

'Thirdly,' said Reiverslaw, 'I'm gaun to turn mysel' intil a guisyard.'

He picked up the thing he had been carrying, and revealed it as a cloak of deerskins which fitted like a loose jerkin. Over his head he drew a cap of skins with slits for his eyes, a roughly-shaped nozzle like a deer's, and on the top the horns of a goat.

'Save us a'!' Richie cried, as he saw his master stand up, his lean, active body surmounted by a beast's head. 'Save us a', ye're no gaun to tamper wi' the accursed thing?'

'That's what I ettle, but the intention is guid, and it's by our intentions we'll be judged, as Mr. Sempill will tell ye. Look at me, ye daft auld fules, for there's naething to be feared o'. I'm for the Wud the nicht, and it's my purpose to bide in cover till the folk are half dementit, and syne, when their een are blind, to join them. I've a notion that there will be some wark wi' the red cock, and I'd like a feather or twa as a keepsake. And I've a sort of notion that my auld friend Chasehope will be there; so as a token o' friendship I'll pit saut on his tail—whilk means that if I get the chance I'll anoint his dowp wi' the hennyseed. Now, you twa, take tent and listen to me. Ye will swear that I telled ye what I have telled ye, and that ye saw me at the Greenshiel dressed up like a merry-andrew. The horns suld hae been a stag's, but I was feared o' hankin' them in the busses, so the puir auld Reiverslaw billy-goat had to dee.'

He was a crazy sight with the goat's head on him, and a formidable sight without it, for as he

stood in that dusk beside two men bent with labour, the one maimed and the other past the allotted span of human years, David had an impression of something desperate and fearless and light-hearted. The shepherds were clearly torn between loyalty and terror, and he himself, while firm enough in his resolve, had to keep his thoughts battened down to prevent his knees knocking. But Reiverslaw seemed to have no fears. He had set about the thing as cannily as if he were selling sheep at Lockerbie fair, and now, with a venture before him which not two other men in Scotland would have contemplated, he was notably the least embarrassed of the party.

'I saw three pyets * flee intil the Wud this morning,' said Prentice, 'and but ane cam' back. That's an unco freit † for the beginnin' o' it!'

'Haud your tongue, ye auld wife,' said Reiverslaew. 'Freits fa' to them that fear them, and I'm no gaun to fash my heid about twa jauds o' birds. . . .'

'I had a vision yestereen,' Richie put in. 'I saw the haill land o' Scotland like a field o' aits, white until the harvest, the haill land frae John o' Groats to Galloway, a' but the parish o' Woodilee, whilk was unplewed and rough wi' briars and thrissles. An' says I to mysel', "Whatever place is yon?" and says a voice to me, "That's what we ca' the Deil's Baulk in the gospel field o' Scotland."'

'And a very true observe, for Deil's Baulk is just what the Wud is, and it's for us to pit a plew intill't and mak' a fire o' the wastry. Set bite and

* Magpies.

† Omen.

sup afore the minister, Richie.'

The shepherd produced some oatcakes, of which David ate only a mouthful, for though he had had no food since morning, his throat was dry and his tongue like a stick. He drank, however, a pint of buttermilk.

'Kirn-milk for you?' the host asked of Reiverslaw. 'I hae nae yill, but Rab has brocht a flask o' aquavitty ye gied him at the lambin'.'

'I'll hae spring water. Nae strong drink for me, for this nicht I'm like Jonadab the son of Rechab. . . . Are ye ready, Mr. Sempill? Ye maun start first, for ye've a tree to speel. There's nae hurry for me till the Deil begins his pipin'.'

'You are either strong in the faith, or of a very stout heart,' said David admiringly.

'No as strong as I might be,' was the answer. 'Afore we part, wad it no be weel for you to pit up a prayer?'

The minister prayed—and it was as if he confessed alone to his God in his closet. He himself was strengthened by it, and the comfort of Richie and Rab was visibly enlarged. But Reiverslaw stood through the devotions in no very devout position, and from him came none of the responses which flowed from the others. Before the 'Amen' he had his goat-cap on, and was peering at the rising moon. He made his staff sing as he whirled it.

David took his strange confederate's hand, and his own shook. Reiverslaw noted his trepidation.

'Fear nocht, sir. It'll gang ill wi' the wirriecow gin we meet him. But what brocht a man o' peace like you into this tuilzie?'

'Jealousy for the honour of my God. And you? For it is less your quarrel than mine.'

The man grinned. 'Write it down that Andra Shillinglaw couldna see an honest man beat, and that he didna like kail-worms.'

David had many times gone over in his mind the route to the glade of the altar, and had compared notes with Reiverslaw that very night. The distance was less than three miles, and he had a couple of hours to reach the place and still be in position well before midnight. As on all the nights of the past week, the oppressive haze of the day had lifted, and the sky rose to an infinite height, thick studded with stars, for the moon was only new risen. David made his way to the dividing glen between the pines and the hazels in a miserable disquiet. He had lost the first fierce anger which had stiffened him for his frustrated expedition on the eve of the second Beltane, and his tacit ostracism all summer by the folk of Woodilee had engendered a profound self-distrust. Even the thought of Katrine Yester did not nerve him; she belonged to a world separated by impassable gulfs from that black necromancy which he warred against. Nor did the fact that he had an ally comfort him, for Reiverslaw, he greatly feared, fought in his own strength and not in that of the Lord, and in such a strife the arm of flesh could not avail them. As he stumbled through the dark undergrowth David's lips moved in anxious prayers.

He entered the pines, and, shaping his course by the low line of cliffs, came to the place where he had first met Katrine. Thus far he felt that he

was not wholly outside the pale of kindly things. But after that he was in enemy country, and the moon was still too low to give him help. He wasted half an hour in the thickets, till by a strong effort of will he forced himself to take his bearings and remember Reiverslaw's instructions. He scrambled up hill again till he was in touch with the outcrop of rock, and then suddenly found himself looking down on the glade where stood the altar.

It was very dark, and the stone was only a ghostly blur. But the darkness was a blessing, for the place was not as he had seen it before, and the sight of it did not revive the terrors he had feared. It looked no more than a woodland glade, and the fact that a rabbit scurried from under his feet seemed a friendly omen. On the far side the trees grew thick, and he selected a gnarled Scots fir as his perch for the night. Its trunk, branchless for sixty feet, was too thick to climb, but he found a younger and slimmer tree, up which he could squirm and from its upper branches traverse to the other. He had not tried the game since he was a boy, and at first his legs and arms seemed too feeble; but the exercise warmed him, and after twice sliding back to the ground, he at last reached the umbrella-like spread of the crest. To gain the other tree proved more difficult than he had thought, and he was compelled to let his body swing and make a long stretch with his right arm. But the task was accomplished in the end, and he found himself on a platform of crooked fir boughs, hidden from everything but the stars, and with a view through the gaps of the branches to the glade below him.

He had now a clear sight of the sky. The moon

was three-quarters up, and the whole of Melanudrigill, with its slopes and valleys, was washed in silver. He was in it and yet above it and outside it, like a man on a hillside looking into a cleft. He made his body comfortable in a crutch of the tree, and looked down on the stage beneath him. It was now lighting up, and the altar was whitened by a stray moonbeam. For the first time that night he felt his spirits returning. The oppression of the Wood was not realised on this outer shell of it, for here only winged things dwelt, and the unclean things of the dark had no wings.

In this happier mood his eyes sought the whereabouts of Calidon. It was hidden by a ridge, the ridge to the west where lay Paradise. The thought gave him an unreasoning pleasure. He was not cut off from the world of light, for, whatever befell on the earth beneath him, he had but to lift up his eyes and they rested on a happier country.

As the moon rose, the multidudinous little noises of a wood at night were hushed. There was a sleepy muttering of cushats to the south of him, and then, with a clatter which made him jump, the birds rose in a flock and flew across the valley. After that there was no sound until the music began.

There was no fixed moment for its beginning, for it seemed to steal insensibly into the air. And it was scarcely music, but rather a delicate babble of tongues which made a crooning like the low notes of a pipe. The sound was all beneath him near the ground, and gathering from different quarters to one centre. Suddenly, in the midst of it came a sharp liquid note, several times repeated, a note

with authority in it like a trumpet, and yet ineffably faint and distant as if it were the echo of an echo. It did not flutter David's heart, for there was no threat in it, but it had a strange effect upon his mind. For it seemed familiar, and there was that in him which answered it. He felt a boy again, for in the call there was the happy riot and the far horizons of childhood, and the noise of hill winds and burns, and the scent of heather and thyme, and all the unforgotten things of memory.

The silver trumpet did not speak again, but the soft babble was creeping nearer, and suddenly just beneath him it broadened and deepened into the sound of pipes. He looked down and saw that the dance had begun. As before, the piper with his hound mask sat cross-legged beyond the altar, and the dancers revolved widdershins around him. . . .

To his amazement he found himself looking on not in terror, but in curiosity. It was a graver dance than that of Beltane, not the mad riot of the bursting life of spring, but the more sober march of summer and the hot suns bringing on the harvest. . . . Seen from above, the figures were only puppets, moving at the bidding of a lilt that rose and fell like a lost wind. The passion of wrath with which he had watched the former Sabbath had utterly gone from him. He felt a curious pity and friendliness, for there was innocence here, misguided innocence.

'Will this be the way God looks down upon the follies of the world?' he asked himself. What was it that Reiverslaw had said?—If the Kirk confines human nature too strictly, it will break out in secret ways, for men and women are born into a

terrestrial world, though they have hopes of Heaven. . . . That was blasphemy, and he knew it, but he did not shudder at it.

How long these gentle dances continued he did not know, for he was in a dream and under the spell of the piping. . . . Then suddenly there came a change. The dancing-floor became dark, and he saw the clouds were coming over the moon. A chill had crept into the air. Lights sprang up out of nowhere, and though the wind had begun to sigh through the trees, he noted that these lights did not flicker. . . . The music stopped, and the dancers crowded together around the altar.

The hound-faced leader stood above them with something in his hand. The mysterious light seemed to burn redly, and he saw that the thing was a bird—a cock which was as scarlet as blood. The altar top was bare, and something bright spurted into the hollow of the stone. From the watchers came a cry which chilled David's marrow, and he saw that they were on their knees.

The leader was speaking in a high shrill voice like a sleepwalker's, and David caught but the one word often repeated—Abiron. Every time it was uttered the man dabbled his finger in the blood on the altar and marked a forehead, and as each received the mark he or she fell prostrate on the ground. . . .

There was no innocence now in that spectacle of obscene abasement. Terror entered into David's soul, and his chief terror was that he had not been afraid before. He had come very near falling himself under the spell.

There followed what seemed to be a roll-call. The

leader read names out of a book, and the prostrate figures answered. The names seemed like an idiot's muttering, not good Scots words, but uncouth gutturals. And always like an under-current came the word Abiron.

Then with an unholy cry the whole coven was on its feet. The pipes began again, and music other than pipes, which seemed to soak out of the ground and the adjacent coverts. Gone was every trace of gentleness and innocency. It was witch-music made by the Devil himself on the red-hot chanter-reeds of Hell, and the assembly capered as if their feet were on the lake of burning marl. The Israelitish prophet in David awoke, and he saw it all with clear eyes and horror-stricken soul.

If the Beltane dance had been hideous, this was the very heart of bestial lust. Round and round it swept, a fury and yet an ordered fury, in which madness and obscenity were mingled. He recognised the faces of women, old and young, who sat devoutly beneath him in kirk of a Sabbath. The men were all masked, but he knew that if he could tear off the beast coverings he would see features which were normally composed into a pious decency. Figure would clasp figure and then fling apart, but in each circuit he noted that the dancers kissed some part of the leader's body, nozzling him like dogs on the roadside.

Up in his tree-top the minister had now an undivided mind. He had the names of several of the females of the coven firm in his memory, and for the men he must trust to Reiverslaw. There were some of the dancers with goat-horns, but as the rout swung round it seemed to him that a new

goat-mask had appeared, a taller, wilder figure, who was specially devout in his obeisance before Hound-face. Was it Reiverslaw with his aniseed?

The night had become very dark, and the only light in the glade came from the candles which burned in its hidden hollows. And then suddenly a colder wind blew, and like the burst of a dam came a deluge of rain. The Lammas floods had broken, stealing upon the world, as is their fashion, out of a fair sky.

It seemed to David—and he held it part of the infernal miracle—that the torrent did not quench the lights. In a trice he himself was soaked to the skin, but the candles still burned, though the rain beat on the floor of the glade with a sound like a whip-lash. . . . But it ended the dance. The silver pipe sounded again, and as the wind rose higher and the falling water slanted under it to search out even the bield of the trees, he saw figures moving hurriedly off. The next time he looked down through the spears of rain—for the hidden moon still made a dim brightness in the world—the glade was empty. Above the noise of the storm he thought he heard the strange babble of tongues, but now it was departing to the far corners of the Wood.

He waited for a little and then tried to descend. But he found it harder to get down than to get up, for he could not find the branch by which he had swung himself from the lesser tree, and in the end had to drop a good twenty feet into the bracken, whence he rolled into the empty glade. . . . He scrambled to his feet and made haste to get out

of it, but not before he had sniffed the odour of unclean pelts.—And yes—surely that was the stink of Reiverslaw's aniseed.

He had no difficulty about his homeward course. Most of the way he ran, but fear had completely left his heart. The rain in his face seemed to cleanse and invigorate him. He had looked upon great wickedness, but he had looked down on it, like the Almighty, from above, and it seemed a frail and pitiful thing—a canker to be rooted out, but a thing with no terror for a servant of God. The Devil was but a botcher after all. And then he remembered how the first notes of the music had melted him, and he felt humbled.

Reiverslaw had arrived at the Greenshiel before him. The place was filled with the reek of burning hides, and David saw that the goat-mask and cloak had been laid on the peats. His ally, a weird dripping figure, sat on a stool sipping the aqua vitæ which Rab Prentice had brought with him. He, who had started the night's venture with such notable sang-froid, was now in a sweat of fright.

'Be thankit ye're safe,' he stuttered, while the spirits spilled over his beard. 'I never thocht to see ye mair, for I never thocht to win out o' yon awsome place. My legs are a' gashed and scartit, for I cam' here through stane and briar like a dementit staig.* Oh, sir, siccan a sicht for mortal een!'

'Saw ye the Foul Thief?' asked the awed Prentice.

'I saw ane in his image, and I got a drap o' the

* Young horse.

red cock's bluid, and I loupit like the lave, but it wasna wi' their unholy glee. Sir, I was fair wud wi' terror—me that am no gien to fear muckle—for I got a cauld grue in my banes and my een turned back in their sockets. I tell ye, I forgot the errand I had come on, I forgot my name and my honest upbringing, and I was like a wean forwandered among bogles. . . . I've burnt thae skins, and when I get hame I'll burn every stitch o' cleading, for the reek o' the Pit is on it.'

'Did you recognise many?' David asked.

'No me. I had nae een to see wi'. I spun round like a teetotum, and I wadna say but I let out skellochs wi' the best—may God forgie me!'

'But the oil—the aniseed?'

Reiverslaw held up something which David saw was an empty bottle.

'I didna fail ye there. For the ae man I kenned in the coven was him that piped. When I cam' near him I felt a stound o' black hate, and there's but the ae man on God's earth that can gar me scunner like yon. So when it was my turn to bow down afore him, he gat mair frae me than a kiss. Unless he burns his breeks this very nicht there'll be a queer savour about the toun o' Chasehope the morn.'

THE JUDGMENT

The night grew colder as it advanced, and the wind, which commonly he welcomed, now cut him to the bone. He drew his cloak round him, and tried to urge his horse to a better pace. But apathy

seemed to have fallen on beast as well as on master, and it jogged funereally, as if in no hurry to leave the chilly out-of-doors for the manse stable. There was a moon behind the flying rack of the sky, and there was light enough to see the dark huddle of the hills. Only where the track dipped to the trees by the river-side was there any depth of shadow.

It was in one such patch of blackness that David heard the sound of a horse behind him. Presently the rider was abreast of him, and even in the dark it seemed that he recognised him. 'Guid e'en to ye, Mr. Sempill,' said a voice, but a gust of wind made it hard to recognise it. The new-comer fell into step beside him, and when in a minute they came out of the trees, David saw that it was Chasehope.

'You are late on the road, friend,' he said.

'I had weighty business on hand,' was the answer. The man was in a good humour, for he was humming a tune.

'This has been a waesome day for you, Mr. Sempill,' he went on. 'Ye have set yoursel' up against God's law and man's law, and ye have taken a mighty fall. I bear no malice—though weel I might if the Lord hadna gi'en me grace to forgive. What I have done in your case I have done painfully as my solemn duty. But there's pardon even for the chief of sinners, and it's not to be believed that one like yoursel', that had once a title in Christ, can be cast away. Seek mercy where it is to be found, Mr. Sempill.'

Chasehope spoke fast like one under the influence of drink, but the man was temperate, so it must have been some excitement of the spirit. In the

dim light David could not see his face, but he knew the kind of light that was in his eye, for he had witnessed it before.

'I speak in all loving-kindness,' he went on. 'If ye're of the Elect, you and me will meet before the Throne. I would hold out a hand to a stumbling brother.'

David made no answer, but his silence did not check Chasehope's flow, for he seemed to be burdened with that which must have vent.

'What have ye made of it wi' your railing accusations? Bethink ye of that, Mr. Sempill. What has become o' your unconvenanted Reiverslaw, and your Glee'd Mark wi' his warlockry, and the bonny may ye trysted wi'? Ane is vanished like a landlouper, and ane will soon ken the wuddy,* and ane is under the mools.'

David spoke at last, and had the other had ears to hear he might have detected a strange note in the minister's voice.

'You speak the truth. I am indeed friendless and forlorn.'

'Friendless and forlorn! 'Deed that's the word. And wherefore, Mr. Sempill? Because ye have flung yoursel' against the rock o' the Elect who are secure in the Lord's hands. What said the worthy Moderator after ye had gone? He likened the Kirk to the stone spoken of in Matthew twenty-one and forty-four—'Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."'

'There was another word spoken—that some for this day's work would burn in Hell.'

* Hangman's rope.

Chasehope laughed his rare and ugly laugh. ' Hoots, man, that was just puir Mr. Fordyce, and a'body kens him. No but what he has the root o' the matter in him—but he's a dwaibly body wi' nae mair fushion than a thresh.'†

' Nevertheless he spoke truly. Hell is waiting for some, and maybe this very night.'

Again Chasehope laughed. ' Is Saul also among the prophets? ' he asked. ' Who are you, a minister outed and excommunicat, that you suld take to the prophesyin'? '

' God makes use of the feeblest pipes to proclaim His will. I tell you, Ephraim Caird, that this very night judgment may overtake you.'

This time Chasehope did not laugh, but moved his horse a little apart.

' Do ye daur to threaten me——? '

' I threaten no man, but God threatens you.'

' Awa' wi' you! I have a firm assurance. And if ye daur lift hand on me—— '

' Be comforted. My hand will not be lifted.'

The man seemed to recover his composure, for he edged his horse nearer and thrust forward his face.

' Ye've aye hated me. I could see it in your een the first day at the manse.'

' I have never hated you. There is no man living in whose company I would rather ride this night. I love you so dearly that I would save your soul.'

' You to speak of savin' souls! ' Chasehope began, and then stopped. For there was something in David which struck a chill even to his excited mind. The quiet masterful voice cut into his wild

†Rush.

gabble like iron into peat. If there was madness in the man, there was a fiercer madness in the minister, for in the last minutes David's weakness had fallen from him like rags, and he had quickened to a flaming zeal. It was a flame of such heat that it burned calmly, but the glow of it, radiating from him, made the other's mere wildfire.

David spoke no further word, but a nervous restlessness came upon Chasehope. He blustered and bragged. See to what a pitch of esteem he had come from following the narrow way! And he whined. He had the frailty of all mortals, but it was atoned for by the imputed righteousness of his Redeemer. He seemed to long for a word of confirmation, and he pawed at the minister's sleeve. But no answer came, and the silence of the other began to unnerve him. His voice had a startled note, he quoted texts as if they were supplications to the stony impassiveness of his companion. When his horse stumbled and he almost collided with the minister, he cried out suddenly, as if in fear.

They had crossed Aller half a mile below Roodfoot, and had come to the turning of the ways. The clouds had thinned and the struggling moon showed Melanudrigill before them, rising and falling like an ocean of darkness. David kept his horse's head straight for it, and Chasehope, who had been riding on his left, edged his beast across the path.

'Ye'll be for the short road. I'll gang quicker by the back o' Windyways. . . . Losh, that's an awesome wind.'

'It is the wind of the Lord's anger.'

'Guid e'en to ye, and God send ye a contrite heart!' Chasehope seemed to have recovered cour-

age at the prospect of parting company.

David laid a hand on his bridle.

'Nay, you and I do not twine here. Our road lies yonder.'

'Are ye daft, man?' Chasehope cried, his voice strong again. 'Who are you to order a man like me?' The voice was strong, but in its shrillness was disquiet.

'I do not order you. Look in your heart and you will find the compulsion. It was not for nothing, Ephraim Caird, that we forgathered this night. The Lord ordained it, and in your marrow you know that you cannot leave me. This night we are in a closer bond than man and wife.'

'Havers!' It was the last spasm of bluster, and the voice was weaker than the word. 'I'll do no man's bidding. Tak' your hand from my bridle.'

The hand was raised, and the other cowered to his saddle-bow, as if to avert a stroke. But the hand did not fall. Instead it gripped his arm, and the grip seemed to crush his bones.

'You fool,' said the grave voice. 'This night I have the strength of ten men, for the Lord is in me. I could strike you dead if I were minded, but the command is on me that we ride together.'

Chasehope's arrogance had drained out of him, but it had left some dregs of courage. He struggled to compose his voice and recover his everyday demeanour.

'Weel, since ye're so pressin' I'll do your will. There's no half a mile differ in the roads.' But the words did nothing to break the spell which choked him. They were like the wry-mouthed bravado of a criminal at the gallows' foot.

No word was spoken as they crossed the haugh and skirted the Fennan Moss, but had there been any one to see he would have noted that David rode erect like a trooper, while Chasehope hung like a sack in his saddle, and that David's knee was hard pressed against the other's, as if the two were shackled.

They came to the edge of the Wood, where the road bent to the right among the pine roots towards the glen of Woodilee burn.

'We dismount here,' said David, 'for we cannot ride among the trees. The beasts will find their way home.'

Chasehope cried out, and his voice now was strangled with terror.

'The Wud! No the Wud! Ye daurna gang there. . . .' He raised his arm and would have struck, but David caught his wrist. He overbalanced himself and rolled to the ground, and in a second David was beside him. The horses, alarmed by the scuffle, dashed up the track.

Fear made the man violent. He flung himself on David, but for all his weight found himself tossed down like a feather. Was this stern figure with the sinews of iron the minister whom he had despised?

The quiet voice spoke.

'You are gross and elderly and I have the exercised strength of youth. At no time could you hope to strive with me. But this night the might of the Lord is in me, and I could break you like a straw. . . . You will come with me, though I have to ding you senseless and carry you.'

The man scrambled to his feet and made the place echo with his cries for help. No answer came,

except the flap of disturbed night birds.

'Where would ye have me gang?' he whimpered.

'Into the Wood—to the place you know of. Ephraim Caird, this night I give you the chance of salvation. I may have erred—my eyes may have deceived me—it may not have been you that capered and piped in a dog's mask to yon lost crew. If I have been wrong, it will be proven yonder. If I have been right, you will be given a chance of repentance. We go up to the Mount together that you may choose between Abiron and Jehovah.'

Chasehope crouched like a dog. 'I daurna—I daurna,' he wailed. 'I'm a believin' man, but I daurna enter the Wud. . . . It's no the season—there's fearsome things ryngin' in't. Oh, ye dinna ken. . . . Let me gang hame, and the morn I'll gang on my hunkers to Kirk Aller and sweir that a' I hae said against ye was a lee. I'll confess . . .'

David's grip was on his arm, but he did not struggle. His legs were loosened, and his whole body drooped like a creature stricken with the palsy.

'I'll make confession—I'll tell ye things that are no to be named—I took the Wud wi' ithers, but I kenned I was a redeemed soul and that the Lord wouldna cast me away. . . . I aye ettled to repent, for I was sure o' the Mercy Seat. . . . It is written that Solomon went after the abominations of Moab, and was yet numbered among the Elect. . . . But I'll hae nae muir o't frae this day. . . . I'll tak' my aith on the Word. . . . I'll cast my idols ahint my back . . . I'll burn the books . . . I'll forswear the Deil . . .'

'You will do it yonder,' said David.

He had never entered the Wood from his side, and in the darkness the road would have been at all times hard to find, but now he seemed to have a map in his brain and to steer by an instinct. In this backward spring there was no sprouting undergrowth, but the dead bracken stalks had not yet shrunk to earth, and he waded waist-deep among them. The man beside him had lost the power of resistance. He followed like an obedient hound, without the need of David's grasp on his arm. Often he stumbled, and once he fell into the dell of a burn and had to be lifted out, but he made no attempt at resistance or escape. He walked and sometimes ran, crouching almost double, and as he went he made little moaning noises which might have been prayers.

The wind was wild in the tree-tops, and rushing down the aisles and corries of the hillside made a sound which was now like a great organ and now like muffled drums. Higher they mounted till they reached a broad shelf of more level ground, where the covert was thick and the speed slow. . . . And then, almost before he was aware of it, David found himself looking at an open space with a dark stone in the midst of it.

The moonlight was faint, but the glade was clear in its outlines, a patch of grey turf in a ring of inky shadow. The altar was no longer white as in the summer midnight, but dark with the drenching winter rains. A bleak, sodden place it now appeared to David, a trivial place, no more than a common howe in a wood.

But the other seemed to look on it with different eyes. When he saw the stone he gave one shrill cry

of terror and collapsed on the ground, burying his face in the moss as if to shut out the sight. David seized him and dragged him forward till he lay by the altar, and all the while his screams rose piercingly above the wind.

'There is no need for confession," the minister said. 'You have betrayed yourself. . . . Now I know with the uttermost certainty that it was you I saw here at Beltane and at Lammas.'

The man did not raise his head, but clasped David's legs and nozzled him like a fawning dog, while, like a dog, he gave short, terrified yelps.

'Your sin is proven and acknowledged,' said David. 'Here on the scene of your guilt you will choose your road. I say to you, as Elijah said to the people of Israel, "If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." This night you renounce Abiron or renounce Christ.'

The man was silent, as if the extremity of fear had frozen his speech. But as David raised him, a shuddering like an epilepsy shook his body. His legs were limp, and David placed him on his knees so that his brow rested on the stone.

'Renounce your master here in his temple . . . I will give you words if you have none of your own. . . . Say after me, "I abhor and reject the Devil and all his works, and I fling myself upon the mercy of God." Man, man, it is your immortal soul that trembles above the Pit.'

The huddled figure was still silent. Then, after a violent shiver, his voice came back to him. He began to stutter words, words meaningless to David's ear. It may be that it was the renunciation of his gods; but, whatever it was, it was not

completed.

For suddenly energy returned to his limbs, and he sprang violently to his feet. Madness glowed in his eyes; his head was held for a second in a listening posture.

'They come,' he screamed. 'The dogs!—the red dogs!'

David seized him, but at that moment the maniac's strength far exceeded his own. He tore himself free with a rending of his clothes. His face was a limp vacancy of terror in which the eyes glared unseeingly. He leaped into the air, spun round, fell, laid his ear to the earth, and then, with incredible swiftness, ran uphill from the glade. Once he halted to listen, and then, so bent that he appeared to run on all-fours, and yelping like a stricken beast, he vanished into the shades. . . . In a pause of the wind David heard his movements grow fainter, and he thought he heard, too, a murmur of voices as at Beltane and Lammas. It seemed to him that these voices were now like the distant baying of hounds.

III

SORCERY

'. . . Come, show me some demonstrations magical,
That I may conjure in some lusty grove,
And have these joys in full possession.'

Marlowe: Dr. Faustus.

SECTION THREE
SORCERY

I

THE BIRTH OF SORCERY

BY SAX ROHMER

(Extracts from Sax Rohmer's book, ' The Romance of Sorcery.')

SORCERY, OR THAT FORM of sorcery which may be termed ceremonial, owes its survival, in a great measure, to Alphonse Louis Constant or ' Eliphas Lévi.' I consider that Eliphas Lévi may justly be called the last of the sorcerers. Yet, outside the study of the student of occultism, Lévi is unknown. How many readers of *A Strange Story, Zanoni,* and *The Haunters and the Haunted* are aware

that the author is one of the privileged few whom the great masters of magic assisted as disciples, was a pupil of Eliphas Lévi? Lord Lytton, as a sorcerer, is an unfamiliar figure; nevertheless, as a sorcerer, and an Adept, he is regarded by those qualified to judge.

Possibly an explanation of Lévi's mystical and misleading phraseology is to be found in his *Magical Ritual* (translated from MSS. and edited by W. Wynn Westcott, M.B.). In the chapter, 'The Tower – La Maison de Dieu,' we read:

'Do you know the Fiery Sword of Samau is stretched over the Garden of Delight, which was the cradle of our race?'

'Do you know why the Deluge was ordered to efface from the earth every vestige of the race of giants?'

'Do you know why the Temple of Solomon was destroyed?'

'These events have been necessary because the Great Arconum of the knowledge of Good and of Evil has been revealed.

'The Angels have fallen because they have attempted to divulge this Great Secret. It is the secret of Life, and when its first word is betrayed that word becomes fatal. If the Devil himself were to utter that word he would die.'

This word, we are told, will destroy each one who speaks it and everyone who hears it spoken. If it were spoken aloud in the hearing of the people of a town, that town would be given over to anathema. If that word were to be whispered beneath the dome of a temple, then within three days the temple doors would fly open, a Voice would utter

a cry, the divine occupant would depart, and the building would fall in ruins. No refuge could be found for one who revealed it; if he mounted to the topmost part of a tower, the lightning flash would strike him; if he tried to hide himself in the caverns of the earth, a torrent would whirl him away; if he sought refuge in the house of a friend he would be betrayed; if in the arms of the wife of his bosom, she would desert him in affright.

'Happy is the man who solves the enigma of the Sphinx, but wretched is he who retails the answer to another.'

He who has solved the secret, and guards its secrecy is described as the 'King of Earth'; he disdains mere riches, is inaccessible to any suffering or fear from destiny; he could await with a smile the crash of worlds. This secret is, moreover, profaned and falsified by its mere revelation, and never yet has a true or just idea come from its betrayal.

'Those who possess it have found it. Those who pronounce it for others to hear have lost it—already.'

Those who would understand the mysteries and perform miracles are warned by Eliphas Lévi to weigh well their knowledge and power in entering upon the attempt; for if they be in any way deficient, he says, they stand upon the brink of an abyss.

'But if you have secured the Lamp and Wand of Initiation, if you are cognizant of the secrets of the Nine, if you never speak of God without the Light which proceeds from Him, if you have received the mystical baptism of the Four Elements,

if you have prayed upon the Seven Mountains, if you know the mode of motion of the Double Sphinxed Chariot, if you have grasped the dogma of why Osiris was a black god, if you are free, if you are a king, if you are in truth a priest in the Temple of Solomon – ask without fear, and speak, for your words will be all powerful in the spiritual kingdom . . .'

Furthermore, however, it is necessary to know the names and powers of the twelve precious jewels which are included in the crown of gold of the sun, and the names of the chief powers of the moon. Also, one must be familiar with the Keys of the Fifty Gates, the Secret of the Thirty-two Paths, and the characters of the Seven Spirits.

Incense plays a very important part in ritualistic sorcery, as it played an important part in Egyptian sorcery. Thus: for conjurations on Sunday the incense should be cinnamon, frankincense, saffron, and red sandal-wood. For Monday, camphor, white sandal-wood, amber, and cucumber seeds. For Thursday, ambergris, cordamon 'grains of paradise,' balm, mace and saffron; and so on.

It may be of interest to mention here the constituents of *Kyphi,* the celebrated incense of Ancient Egypt. A recipe for its preparation is contained in the Ebers' papyrus, and Ebers says that three different varieties were made by L. Voigt, a Berlin Chemist. That from the formula of Democritus was the best. It consisted of resin, wine, *Rad. Galangar*,* juniper berries, root of aromatic rush, asphaltum, mastic, myrrh, Burgundy grapes, and honey.

*Galangal Root.

Lévi says of the Seal of Solomon:

'It consisted of the interlaced triangles; the erect triangle is of flame colour, the inverse is coloured blue. In the centre space there may be drawn a Tau cross and three Hebrew Yods, or a *crux ansata* (*ankh*), or the Triple Tau of the Arch-mosms. He who with intelligence and will is armed with this emblem has need of no other thing; he should be all-potent, for this is the perfect sign of the Absolute.'

Eliphas Lévi also instructs us upon the formation and consecration of the Magic Wand. He who would possess it must select the wood of an almond or nut tree which has just flowered for the first time; the bough should be cut off at one blow by the 'magical sickle.' It must be bored evenly from end to end without causing any crack or injury, and a magnetized steel needle of the same length as the bough must be introduced. One end must be closed by a clear, transparent glass bead, and the other by a similar bead of resin: the ends should be covered then with sachets of silk. Two rings must next be fitted near the middle of the wand, one of copper and one of zinc, and two lengths of fine copper chain rolled around the wand. Upon the wand should then be written the names of Twelve Spirits of the Zodiacal Cycle, with their sigils added:

Aries	Sarahiel
Taurus	Araziel
Gemini	Saraiel
Cancer	Phakiel
Leo	Seratiel
Virgo	Schaltiel

Libra	Chadakiel
Scorpio	Sartziel
Saggittarius	Saritiel
Capricornus	Semaqiel
Aquarius	Tzakmaqiel
Pisces	Vacatiel

Finally, upon the copper ring must be engraved in Hebrew letters, from right to left, the words 'The Holy Jerusalem,' H.QDShH JRUŚhLIM; and upon the zinc ring in Hebrew letters, from right to left, the words, 'The King Solomon,' H MLK ShLMH, Heh Melek Shelomoh.

When the wand is complete, it must be consecrated by the invocations of the Spirits of the Four Elements and the Seven Planets, by ceremonies lasting over the seven days of a week, using the special incense and prayers for each day.

The consecrated wand, in common with all magical instruments, should be kept wrapped in silk, and never allowed in contact with any colour but black. The ideal receptacle for it is a cedar or ebony box.

With this wand duly made and fully consecrated, 'the Magus can cure unknown diseases, he may enchant a person, or cause him to fall asleep at will, can wield the forces of the elements and cause Oracles to speak.'

One of the most remarkable works ever contributed to the literature of the occult is that called *The Magus, by Francis Barrett, F.R.C.,* published in London in 1801. In the section of this huge and elaborate work entitled '*Natural Magic,*' the author says, 'There are some *collyriums* which make us see the images of spirits in the air or else-

where; which I can make of the gall of a man and the eyes of a black cat, and some other things. The same is made, likewise, of the blood of a lapwing, bat, and a goat; and if a smooth, shining piece of steel be smeared over with the juice of a mugwort, and be made to fume, it causes invoked spirits to appear.' Furthermore, he tells us: 'So if anyone shall swallow the heart of a lapwing, swallow, weasel, or a mole, while it is yet living and warm with natural heat, it improves his intellect, and helps him to remember, understand, and foretell things to come. Hence, this general rule – that whatever things are taken for magical uses from animals, whether they are bone, members, hair, excrements, nails or anything else, they must be taken from these animals while they are yet alive, and if it is possible, that they may live afterwards. 'If you take the tongue of a frog, you put the frog into the water again': and Democritus writes, that if anyone shall take out the tongue of a water-frog, no other part of the animal sticking to it, and lay it upon the place where the heart of a woman beats, she is compelled, against her will, to answer whatsoever you shall ask of her. . . .'

Book II, Part III, of this huge and elaborately illustrated work (copies of which are now rare) deals with the 'Particular Composition of the Magic Circle.'

The following instructions, we learn, are the principle and sum-total of all that has gone before, only, says *The Magus:* 'We have brought it rather into a closer train of experiment and practice than any of the rest; for here you may behold the distinct functions of the spirits; likewise the whole

preparation of magical ceremonies is here described, syllable by syllable.'

But as the greatest power is attracted to the circles (' for they are certain fortresses '), I shall now give some particulars respecting the composition and figure of a circle.

The forms of circles are not always one and the same, but are changed according to the order of spirits that are to be called – their places, times, days and hours; for in making a circle it should be considered in what time of the year, what day, and what hour; what spirits you would call, and to which star or region they belong, and what functions they have: therefore, to begin, let there be made three circles of the latitude of nine feet, distant one from another about a hand's breadth.

First write in the middle circle the name of the hour wherein you essay the magical task; in the second place, write the name of the angel of the hour; in the third place the seal of the angel of the hour; fourthly, the name of the angel that rules the day, and the names of his ministers; in the fifth place the name of the present time; sixthly, the names of the spirits ruling in that part of time, and their *presidents;* seventhly, the name of the head of the sign ruling in the time; eighthly, the name of the earth, according to the time of conjuration; ninthly, and in order to complete the middle circle, write the name of the sun and moon, according to the said rule of the time: ' for as the times are changed, so are the names.'

In the outer circle let there be drawn, in the four angles, ' The names of the great presidential spirits of the air that wherein you do this work, viz., the

names of the king and his three ministers. Without the circle, in four angles, the *pentagons* he made. In the inner circle write four divine names, with four crosses interposed; in the middle of the circle, viz., towards the east, let be written Alpha; towards the west, Omega; and let a cross divide the middle of the circle.'

When the circle is then finished, according to rule, one must proceed to consecrate and bless it, in the folowing manner:

'*In the name of the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, proceed we to our work in these mysteries to accomplish that which we desire; we therefore in the names aforesaid, consecrate this piece of ground for our defence, so that no spirit whatsoever shall be able to break these boundaries, neither be able to cause injury nor detriment to any of us here assembled; but that they may be compelled to stand before the circle, and answer truly our demands, so far as it pleaseth Him who liveth for ever and ever; and who says, I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty; I am the First and the Last, who am living and was dead; and behold I live for ever and ever; and I hold the keys of death and hell. Bless, O Lord! this creature of earth wherein we stand; confirm, O God! Thy strength in us, so that neither the adversary nor any evil thing may cause us to fall, etc., etc. Amen.*'

The following particulars should also be studied:

Benediction of Perfumes:

'The God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of

Jacob, bless here the creatures of these kinds, that they may fill up the power and virtue of their odours; so that neither the enemy nor any false imagination may be able to enter into them; etc. Then sprinkle the same with holy water.'

The Exorcism of Fire into which the Perfumes are to be put.

'I exorcise thee, O thou creature of fire, by the only true God Jehovah, Adonai, Tetragrammaton, that forthwith thou cast away every phantasm from thee, that it shall do no hurt to any one. We beseech thee, O Lord, to bless this creature of fire, and sanctify it so that it may be blessed to set forth the praise and glory of thy holy name, and that no hurt may be permitted to come to the exorciser or spectators, etc. Amen.'

Of the Habit of the Exorcist.

'It should be made of fine white linen and clean, and to come round the body loose, but close before and behind.'

Of the Pentacle of Solomon.

'It is always necessary to have this pentacle in readiness to bind with, in case the spirits should refuse to be obedient, as they can have no power over the exorcist while provided with and fortified by the pentacle, the virtue of the holy names therein written presiding with wonderful influence over the spirits.

'It should be made in the day and hour of Mercury upon parchment made of kidskin, or virgin, or pure, clean, white paper; and the figures

and letters wrote in pure gold; and it ought to be consecrated and sprinkled (as before often spoken) with holy water.'

When the vesture is put on, it will be convenient to say the following oration:

An Oration when the Habit or Vesture is put on.

'Amoor, Amacor, Amides, Theodonias, Amitor; by the merits of the angels, O Lord, I will put on the garment of Salvation, that this which I desire I may bring to effect, through thee, the most holy Adonai, whose kingdom endureth for ever and ever. *Amen.*'

I have omitted many of the elaborate particulars which follow . . . because it forms no part of my intention to tempt the curious to dabble in a dangerous pursuit; but the lengthy ceremonial being duly performed, we are assured that there will appear infinite visions, apparitions, phantasms, etc., beating of drums and the sound of all kinds of musical instruments: 'which is done by the spirits, that with the terror they might force some of the companions out of the circle, because they can effect nothing against the exorcist himself; after this you shall see an infinite company of archers with a great multitude of horrible beasts, which will arrange themselves as if they would devour the companions; nevertheless fear nothing.'

Thereupon, the exorcist, holding the pentacle in his hand, must say, 'Avoid hence these iniquities, by virtue of the banner of God.' At this, the spirits will be compelled to obey the exorcist, and the company shall see them no more.

Then let the exorcist, stretching out his hand

with the pentacle, say:

'Behold, the pentacle of *Solomon,* which I have brought into your presence; behold the person of the exorcist in the middle of the exorcism, who is armed by God, without fear, and well provided, who potently invocateth and calleth you by exorcising; come, therefore, with speed, by the virtue of these names, Aye Saraye, Aye Saraye; defer not to come, by the eternal names of the living and true God, Eloy, Archima, Rabur, and by the pentacle of Solomon here present which powerfully reigns over you, and by the virtue of the celestial spirits, your words and by the person of the exorcist, in the middle of the exorcism; being conjured, make haste and come, and yield obedient to your master, who is called Octinomos.'

This invocation being performed, immediately there will be hissings in the four parts of the world, whereupon the exorcist must say:

'Why stay you? Wherefore do you delay? What do you? Prepare yourselves to be obedient to your master in the name of the Lord, Bathet or Vachat rushing upon Abrac, Abeor coming upon Aberir.'

Then they will immediately come in their proper forms; and:

'When you see them before the circle, show them the pentacle covered with fine linen; uncover it, and say:

'"Behold your confusion if you refuse to be obedient"; and suddenly they will appear in a peaceable form, and will say, "Ask what you will, for we are prepared to fulfil all your commands, for the Lord hath subjected us hereunto."'

Their Familiar Forms are as follows:

The spirits appear generally of a great and full stature, soft and phlegmatic, of colour like a black, obscure cloud, having a swollen countenance, with eyes red and full of water, and bald head, and teeth like a wild boar; their motion is like an exceeding great motion of the sea. For their sign there will appear an exceeding great rain, and their particular shapes are:

A King, like an archer, riding upon a doe.
A little boy.
A woman hunter with a bow and arrows.
A cow; or little dog; a goose.
A green or silver coloured garment.
An arrow; a creature with many feet.

The spirits of the air of Friday are subject to the west wind; their nature is to give silver, to incite men, and incline them to luxury, to cause marriages, to allure men to love women, to cause or take away infirmities, and to do all things which have motion.

Their Familiar Shapes.

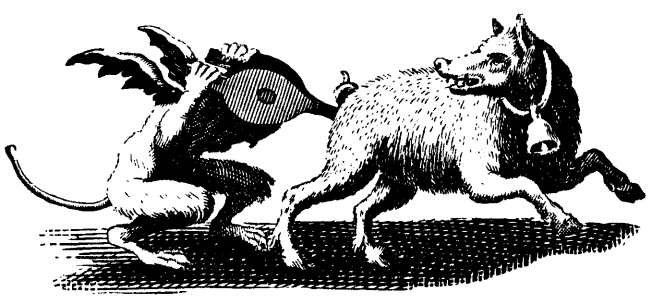
They appear with a fair body, of middle stature, with an amiable and pleasant countenance, of colour white or green, their upper parts golden; the motion of them is like a clear star. For their sign will appear naked virgins round the circle, which will strive to allure the invocatur to dalliance with them; but:

Their Particular Shapes are:

A King, with sceptre, riding on a camel.

A naked girl; a she-goat.
A camel; a dove.
A white or green garment.
Flowers; the herb Savine.

But there are repulsive Elemental forms, as well, in addition to those mentioned by Barrett, having, for instance, the appearance of huge insects, with heads of birds or of human beings.



THE CYPRIAN CAT

BY DOROTHY L. SAYERS

IT'S EXTRAORDINARILY DECENT OF you to come along and see me like this, Harringay. Believe me, I do appreciate it. It isn't every busy K.C. who'd do as much for such a hopeless sort of client. I only wish I could spin you a more workable kind of story, but honestly, I can only tell you exactly what I told Peabody. Of course, I can see he doesn't believe a word of it, and I don't blame him. He thinks I ought to be able to make up a more plausible tale than that – and I suppose I could, but where's the use? One's almost bound to fall down somewhere if one tries to swear to a lie. What I'm going to tell you is the absolute truth. I fired one shot and one shot only, and that was at the cat. It's funny that one should be hanged for shooting at a cat.

Merridew and I were always the best of friends; school and college and all that sort of thing. We didn't see very much of each other after the war, because we were living at opposite ends of the country; but we met in town from time to time and wrote occasionally and each of us knew that the

other was there in the background, so to speak. Two years ago, he wrote and told me he was getting married. He was just turned forty and the girl was fifteen years younger, and he was tremendously in love. It gave me a bit of a jolt – you know how it is when your friends marry. You feel they will never be quite the same again; and I'd got used to the idea that Merridew and I were cut out to be old bachelors. But of course I congratulated him and sent him a wedding present, and I did sincerely hope he'd be happy. He was obviously over head and ears; almost dangerously so, I thought, considering all things. Though except for the difference of age it seemed suitable enough. He told me he had met her at – of all places – a rectory garden-party down in Norfolk, and that she had actually never been out of her native village. I mean, literally – not so much as a trip to the nearest town. I'm not trying to convey that she wasn't pukka, or anything like that. Her father was some queer sort of recluse – a medievalist, or something – desperately poor. He died shortly after their marriage.

I didn't see anything of them for the first year or so. Merridew is a civil engineer, you know, and he took his wife away after the honeymoon to Liverpool, where he was doing something in connection with the harbour. It must have been a big change for her from the wilds of Norfolk. I was in Birmingham, with my nose kept pretty close to the grindstone, so we only exchanged occasional letters. His were what I can only call deliriously happy, especially at first. Later on, he seemed a little worried about his wife's health. She was restless; town life didn't suit her; he'd be glad when he could

finish up his Liverpool job and get her away into the country. There wasn't any doubt about their happiness, you understand – she'd got him body soul as they say, and as far as I could make out it was mutual. I want to make that perfectly clear.

Well, to cut a long story short, Merridew wrote to me a the beginning of last month and said he was just off to a new job – a waterworks extension scheme down in Somerset; and he asked if I could possibly cut loose and join them there for a few weeks. He wanted to have a yarn with me, and Felice was longing to make my acquaintance. They had got rooms at the village inn. It was rather a remote spot, but there was fishing and scenery and so forth, and I should be able to keep Felice company while he was working up at the dam. I was about fed up with Birmingham, what with the heat and one thing and another, and it looked pretty good to me, and I was due for a holiday anyhow, so I fixed up to go. I had a bit of business to do in town, which I calculated would take me about a week, so I said I'd go down to Little Hexham on June 20th.

As it happened, my business in London finished itself off unexpectedly soon, and on the sixteenth I found myself absolutely free and stuck in an hotel with road-drills working just under the windows and a tar-spraying machine to make things livelier. You remember what a hot month it was – flaming June and no mistake about it. I didn't see any point in waiting, so I sent off a wire to Merridew, packed my bag and took the train for Somerset the same evening. I couldn't get a compartment to myself, but I found a first-class smoker with only

three seats occupied, and stowed myself thankfully into the fourth corner. There was a military-looking old boy, an elderly female with a lot of bags and baskets, and a girl. I thought I should have a nice, peaceful journey.

So I should have, if it hadn't been for the unfortunate way I'm built. It was quite all right at first – as a matter of fact, I think I was half asleep, and I only woke up properly at seven o'clock, when the waiter came to say that dinner was on. The other people weren't taking it, and when I came back from the restaurant car I found that the old boy had gone, and there were only the two women left. I settled down in my corner again, and gradually, as we went along, I found a horrible feeling creeping over me that there was a cat in the compartment somewhere. I'm one of those wretched people who can't stand cats. I don't mean just that I prefer dogs – I mean that the presence of a cat in the same room with me makes me feel like nothing on earth. I can't describe it, but I believe quite a lot of people are affected that way. Something to do with electricity, or so they tell me. I've read that very often the dislike is mutual, but it isn't so with me. The brutes seem to find me abominably fascinating – make a bee-line for my leg every time. It's a funny sort of complaint, and it doesn't make me at all popular with dear old ladies.

Anyway, I began to feel more and more awful and I realized that the old girl at the other end of the seat must have a cat in one of her innumerable baskets. I thought of asking her to put it out in the corridor, or calling the guard and having it removed, but I knew how silly it would sound and

made up my mind to try and stick it. I couldn't say the animal was misbehaving itself or anything, and she looked a pleasant old lady; it wasn't her fault that I was a freak. I tried to distract my mind by looking at the girl.

She was worth looking at, too – very slim, and dark with one of those dead-white skins that make you think of magnolia blossom. She had the most astonishing eyes, too – I've never seen eyes quite like them; a very pale brown, almost amber, set wide apart and a little slanting, and they seemed to have a kind of luminosity of their own, if you get what I mean. I don't know if this sounds – I don't want you to think I was bowled over, or anything. As a matter of fact she held no sort of attraction for me, although I could imagine a different type of man going potty about her. She was just unusual, that was all. But however much I tried to think of other things I couldn't get rid of the uncomfortable feeling, and eventually I gave it up and went out into the corridor. I just mention this because it will help you to understand the rest of the story. If you can only realize how perfectly awful I feel when there's a cat about – even when it's shut up in a basket – you'll understand better how I came to buy the revolver.

Well, we got to Hexham Junction, which was the nearest station to Little Hexham, and there was old Merridew waiting on the platform. The girl was getting out too – but not the old lady with the cat, thank goodness – and I was just handing her traps out after her when he came galloping up and hailed us.

'Hullo!' he said, 'why that's splendid! Have you

introduced yourselves?' So I tumbled to it then that the girl was Mrs. Merridew, who'd been up to Town on a shopping expedition, and I explained to her about my change of plans and she said how jolly it was that I could come – the usual things. I noticed what an attractive low voice she had and how graceful her movements were, and I understood – though, mind you, I didn't share – Merridew's infatuation.

We got into his car – Mrs. Merridew sat in the back and I got up beside Merridew, and was very glad to feel the air and to get rid of the oppressive electric feeling I'd had in the train. He told me the place suited them wonderfully, and had given Felice an absolutely new lease of life, so to speak. He said he was very fit, too, but I thought myself that he looked rather fagged and nervy.

You'd have liked that inn, Harringay. The real, old-fashioned stuff, as quaint as you make 'em, and everything genuine – none of your Tottenham Court Road antiques. We'd all had our grub, and Mrs. Merridew said she was tired; so she went up to bed early and Merridew and I had a drink and went for a stroll round the village. It's a tiny hamlet quite at the other end of nowhere; lights out at ten, little thatched houses with pinched-up attic windows like furry ears – the place purred in its sleep. Merridew's working gang didn't sleep there, of course – they'd run up huts for them at the dams, a mile beyond the village.

The landlord was just locking up the bar when we came in – a block of a man with an absolutely expressionless face. His wife was a thin, sandy-haired woman who looked as though she was too

down-trodden to open her mouth. But I found out afterwards that was a mistake, for one evening when he'd taken one or two over the eight and showed signs of wanting to make a night of it, his wife sent him off upstairs with a gesture and a look that took the heart out of him. That first night she was sitting in the porch, and hardly glanced at us as we passed her. I always thought her an uncomfortable kind of woman, but she certainly kept her house most exquisitely neat and clean.

They'd given me a noble bedroom, close under the eaves with a long, low casement window overlooking the garden. The sheets smelt of lavender, and I was between them and asleep almost before you could count ten. I was tired, you see. But later in the night I woke up. I was too hot, so took off some of the blankets and then strolled across to the window to get a breath of air. The garden was bathed in moonshine and on the lawn I could see something twisting and turning oddly. I stared a bit before I made it out to be two cats. They didn't worry me at that distance, and I watched them for a bit before I turned in again. They were rolling over one another and jumping away again and chasing their own shadows on the grass, intent on their own mysterious business – taking themselves seriously, the way cats always do. It looked like a kind of ritual dance. Then something seemed to startle them, and they scampered away.

I went back to bed, but I couldn't get to sleep again. My nerves seemed to be all on edge. I lay watching the window and listening to a kind of soft rustling noise that seemed to be going on in the big wisteria that ran along my side of the house. And

then something landed with a soft thud on the sill – a great Cyprian cat.

What did you say? Well, one of those striped grey and black cats. Tabby, that's right. In my part of the country they call them Cyprus cats, or Cyprian cats. I'd never seen such a monster. It stood with its head cocked sideways, staring into the room and rubbing its ears very softly against the upright bar of the casement.

Of course, I couldn't do with that. I shooed the brute away, and it made off without a sound. Heat or no heat, I shut and fastened the window. Far out in the shrubbery I thought I heard a faint miauling; then silence. After that, I went straight off to sleep again and lay like a log till the girl came in to call me.

The next day, Merridew ran us up in his car to see the place where they were making the dam, and that was the first time I realized that Felice's nerviness had not been altogether cured. He showed us where they had diverted part of the river into a swift little stream that was to be used for working the dynamo of an electrical plant. There were a couple of planks laid across the stream, and he wanted to take us over to show us the engine. It wasn't extraordinarily wide or dangerous, but Mrs. Merridew peremptorily refused to cross it, and got quite hysterical when he tried to insist. Eventually he and I went over and inspected the machinery by ourselves. When we got back she had recovered her temper and apologized for being so silly. Merridew abased himself, of course, and I began to feel a little *de trop*. She told me afterwards that she had once fallen into the river as a child, and been

nearly drowned, and it had left her with a what d'ye call it – a complex about running water. And but for this one trifling episode, I never heard a single sharp word pass between them all the time I was there; nor, for a whole week, did I notice anything else to suggest a flaw in Mrs. Merridew's radiant health. Indeed, as the days wore on to midsummer and the heat grew more intense, her whole body seemed to glow with vitality. It was as though she was lit up from within.

Merridew was out all day and working very hard. I thought he was overdoing it and asked him if he was sleeping badly. He told me that, on the contrary, he fell asleep every night the moment his head touched the pillow, and – what was most unusual with him – had no dreams of any kind. I myself felt well enough, but the hot weather made me languid and disinclined for exertion. Mrs. Merridew took me out for long drives in the car. I would sit for hours, lulled into a half-slumber by the rush of warm air and the purring of the engine, and gazing at my driver, upright at the wheel, her eyes fixed unwaveringly upon the spinning road. We explored the whole of the country to the south and east of Little Hexham, and once or twice went as far north as Bath. Once I suggested that we should turn eastward over the bridge and run down into what looked like rather beautiful wooded country, but Mrs. Merridew didn't care for the idea; she said it was a bad road and that the scenery on that side was disappointing.

Altogether, I spent a pleasant week at Little Hexham, and if it had not been for the cats I should have been perfectly comfortable. Every night the

garden seemed to be haunted by them – the Cyprian cat that I had seen the first night of my stay, and a little ginger one and a horrible stinking black Tom were especially tiresome, and one night there was a terrified white kitten that mewed for an hour on end under my window. I flung boots and books at my visitors till I was heartily weary, but they seemed determined to make the inn garden their rendezvous. The nuisance grew worse from night to night; on one occasion I counted fifteen of them, sitting on their hinder-ends in a circle, while the Cyprian cat danced her shadow-dance among them, working in and out like a weaver's shuttle. I had to keep my window shut, for the Cyprian cat evidently made a habit of climbing up by the wisteria. The door, too; for once when I had gone down to fetch something from the sitting-room, I found her on my bed, kneading the coverlet with her paws – pr'rp, pr'rp, pr'rp – with her eyes closed in a sensuous ecstasy. I beat her off, and she spat at me as she fled into the dark passage.

I asked the landlady about her, but she replied rather curtly that they kept no cat at the inn, and it is true that I never saw any of the beasts in the daytime: but one evening about dusk I caught the landlord in one of the outhouses. He had the ginger cat on his shoulder, and was feeding her with something that looked like strips of liver. I remonstrated with him for encouraging the cats about the place and asked whether I could have a different room, explaining that the nightly caterwauling disturbed me. He half opened his slits of eyes and murmured that he would ask his wife about it; but nothing

was done, and in fact I believe there was no other bedroom in the house.

And all this time the weather got hotter and heavier, working up for thunder, with the sky like brass and the earth like iron, and the air quivering over it so that it hurt your eyes to look at it.

All right, Harringay – I am trying to keep to the point. And I'm not concealing anything from you. I say that my relations with Mrs. Merridew were perfectly ordinary. Of course I saw a good deal of her, because as I explained Merridew was out all day. We went up to the dam with him in the morning and brought the car back, and naturally we had to amuse one another as best we could till the evening. She seemed quite pleased to be in my company, and I couldn't dislike her. I can't tell you what we talked about – nothing in particular. She was not a talkative woman. She would sit or lie for hours in the sunshine, hardly speaking – only stretching out her body to the light and heat. Sometimes she would spend a whole afternoon playing with a twig or a pebble, while I sat by and smoked. Restful! No. No – I shouldn't call her a restful personality, exactly. Not to me, at any rate. In the evening she would liven up and talk a little more, but she generally went up to bed early, and left Merridew and me to yarn together in the garden.

Oh! about the revolver. Yes. I bought that in Bath, when I had been at Little Hexham exactly a week. We drove over in the morning, and while Mrs. Merridew got some things for her husband, I prowled round the second-hand shops. I had intended to get an air-gun or a pea-shooter or something of that kind, when I saw this. You've seen it,

of course. It's very tiny – what people in books describe as 'little more than a toy,' but quite deadly enough. The old boy who sold it to me didn't seem to know much about firearms. He'd taken it in pawn some time back, he told me, and there were ten rounds of ammunition with it. He made no bones about a licence or anything – glad enough to make a sale, no doubt, without putting difficulties in a customer's way. I told him I knew how to handle it, and mentioned by way of a joke that I meant to take a pot-shot or two at the cats. That seemed to wake him up a bit. He was a dried-up little fellow, with a scrawny grey beard and a stringy neck. He asked me where I was staying. I told him at Little Hexham.

'You better be careful, sir,' he said. 'They think a heap of their cats down there, and it's reckoned unlucky to kill them.' And then he added something I couldn't quite catch, about a silver bullet. He was a doddering old fellow, and he seemed to have some sort of scruple about letting me take the parcel away, but I assured him that I was perfectly capable of looking after it and myself. I left him standing in the door of his shop, pulling at his beard and staring after me.

That night the thunder came. The sky had turned to lead before evening, but the dull heat was more oppressive than the sunshine. Both the Merridews seemed to be in a state of nerves – he sulky and swearing at the weather and the flies, and she wrought up to a queer kind of vivid excitement. Thunder affects some people that way. I wasn't much better, and to make things worse I got the feeling that the house was full of cats. I couldn't

see them but I knew they were there, lurking behind the cupboards and flitting noiselessly about the corridors. I could scarcely sit in the parlour and I was thankful to escape to my room. Cats or no cats I had to open the window, and I sat there with my pyjama jacket unbuttoned, trying to get a breath of air. But the place was like the inside of a copper furnace. And pitch-dark. I could scarcely see from my window where the bushes ended and the lawn began. But I could hear and feel the cats. There were little scrapings in the wisteria and scufflings among the leaves, and about eleven o'clock one of them started the concert with a loud and hideous wail. Then another and another joined in – I'll swear there were fifty of them. And presently I got that foul sensation of nausea, and the flesh crawled on my bones, and I knew that one of them was slinking close to me in the darkness. I looked round quickly, and there she stood, the great Cyprian; right against my shoulder, her eyes glowing like green lamps. I yelled and struck out at her, and she snarled as she leaped out and down. I heard her thump the gravel, and the yowling burst out all over the garden with renewed vehemence. And then all in a moment there was utter silence, and in the far distance there came a flickering blue flash and then another. In the first of them I saw the far garden wall, topped along all its entire length with cats, like a nursery frieze. When the second flash came the wall was empty.

At two o'clock the rain came. For three hours before that I had sat there, watching the lightning as it spat across the sky and exulting in the crash of the thunder. The storm seemed to carry off all the

electrical disturbance in my body; I could have shouted with excitement and relief. Then the first heavy drops fell; then a steady downpour; then a deluge. It struck the iron-baked garden with a noise like steel rods falling. The smell of the ground came up intoxicatingly, and the wind rose and flung the rain in against my face. At the other end of the passage I heard a window thrown to and fastened, but I leaned out into the tumult and let the water drench my head and shoulders. The thunder still rumbled intermittently, but with less noise and farther off, and in an occasional flash I saw the white grille of falling water drawn between me and the garden.

It was after one of these thunder-peals that I became aware of a knocking at my door. I opened it, and there was Merridew. He had a candle in his hand, and his face was terrified.

'Felice!' he said, abruptly. 'She's ill. I can't wake her. For God's sake, come and give me a hand.'

I hurried down the passage after him. There were two beds in his room – a great four-poster, hung with crimson damask, and a small camp bedstead drawn up near to the window. The small bed was empty, the bedclothes tossed aside; evidently he had just risen from it. In the four-poster lay Mrs. Merridew, naked, with only a sheet upon her. She was stretched flat upon her back, her long black hair in two plaits over her shoulders. Her face was waxen and shrunk, like the face of a corpse, and her pulse, when I felt it, was so faint that at first I could scarcely feel it. Her breathing was very slow and shallow and her flesh cold. I shook her, but there was no response at all. I lifted her eyelids, and

noticed how the eyeballs were turned up under the upper lid, so that only the whites were visible. The touch of my finger-tip upon the sensitive ball evoked no reaction. I immediately wondered whether she took drugs.

Merridew seemed to think it necessary to make some explanation. He was babbling about the heat – she couldn't bear so much as a silk nightgown – she had suggested that he should occupy the other bed – he had slept heavily – right through the thunder. The rain blowing in on his face had aroused him. He had got up and shut the window. Then he had called to Felice to know if she was all right – he thought the storm might have frightened her. There was no answer. He had struck a light. Her condition had alarmed him – and so on.

I told him to pull himself together and to try whether, by chafing his wife's hands and feet, we could restore the circulation. I had it firmly in my mind that she was under the influence of some opiate. We set to work, rubbing and pinching and slapping her with wet towels and shouting her name in her ear. It was like handling a dead woman, except for the very slight but perfectly regular rise and fall of her bosom, on which – with a kind of surprise that there should be any flaw on its magnolia whiteness – I noticed a large brown mole, just over the heart. To my perturbed fancy it suggested a wound and a menace. We had been hard at it for some time, with the sweat pouring off us, when we became aware of something going on outside the window – a stealthy bumping and scraping against the panes. I snatched up the candle and looked out.

On the sill, the Cyprian cat sat and clawed at the casement. Her drenched fur clung limply to her body, her eyes glared into mine, her mouth was opened in protest. She scrabbled furiously at the latch, her hind claws slipping and scratching on the woodwork. I hammered on the pane and bawled at her, and she struck back at the glass as though possessed. As I cursed her and turned away she set up a long, despairing wail.

Merridew called to me to bring back the candle and leave the brute alone. I returned to the bed, but the dismal crying went on and on incessantly. I suggested to Merridew that he should wake the landlord and get hot-water bottles and some brandy from the bar and see if a messenger could not be sent for a doctor. He departed on this errand, while I went on with my massage. It seemed to me that the pulse was growing still fainter. Then I suddenly recollected that I had a small brandy-flask in my bag. I ran out to fetch it, and as I did so the cat suddenly stopped its howling.

As I entered my own room the air blowing through the open window struck gratefully upon me. I found my bag in the dark and was rummaging for the flask among my shirts and socks when I heard a loud, triumphant mew, and turned round in time to see the Cyprian cat crouched for a moment on the sill, before it sprang in past me and out at the door. I found the flask and hastened back with it, just as Merridew and the landlord came running up the stairs.

We all went into the room together. As we did so, Mrs. Merridew stirred, sat up, and asked us what in the world was the matter.

I have seldom felt quite such a fool.

Next day the weather was cooler; the storm had cleared the air. What Merridew had said to his wife I do not know. None of us made any public allusion to the night's disturbance, and to all appearance Mrs. Merridew was in the best of health and spirits. Merridew took a day off from the waterworks, and we all went for a long drive and picnic together. We were on the best of terms with one another. Ask Merridew – he will tell you the same thing. He would not – he could not, surely – say otherwise. I can't believe, Harringay, I simply cannot believe that he could imagine or suspect me – I say, there was nothing to suspect. Nothing.

Yes – this is the important date – the 24th of June. I can't tell you any more details; there is nothing to tell. We came back and had dinner just as usual. All three of us were together all day, till bedtime. On my honour I had no private interview of any kind that day, either with him or with her. I was the first to go to bed, and I heard the others come upstairs about half an hour later. They were talking cheerfully.

It was a moonlight night. For once, no caterwauling came to trouble me. I didn't even bother to shut the window or the door. I put the revolver on the chair beside me before I lay down. Yes, it was loaded. I had no special object in putting it there, except that I meant to have a go at the cats if they started their games again.

I was desperately tired, and thought I should drop off to sleep at once, but I didn't. I must have been overtired, I suppose. I lay and looked at the moon-

light. And then, about midnight, I heard what I had been half expecting: a stealthy scrabbling in the wisteria and a faint miauling sound.

I sat up in bed and reached for the revolver. I heard the 'plop' as the big cat sprang up on to the window-ledge; I saw her black and silver flanks, and the outline of her round head, pricked ears and upright tail. I aimed and fired, and the beast let out one frightful cry and sprang down into the room.

I jumped out of bed. The crack of the shot had sounded terrific in the silent house, and somewhere I heard a distant voice call out. I pursued the cat into the passage, revolver in hand – with some idea of finishing it off, I suppose. And then, at the door of the Merridew's room, I saw Mrs. Merridew. She stood with one hand on each doorpost, swaying to and fro. Then she fell down at my feet. Her bare breast was all stained with blood. And as I stood staring at her, clutching the revolver, Merridew came out and found us – like that.

Well, Harringay, that's my story, exactly as I told it to Peabody. I'm afraid it won't sound very well in Court, but what can I say? The trail of blood led from my room to hers; the cat must have run that way! I *know* it was the cat I shot. I can't offer any explanation. I don't know who shot Mrs. Merridew, or why, I can't help it if the people at the inn say they never saw the Cyprian cat; Merridew saw it that other night, and I know he wouldn't lie about it. Search the house, Harringay – that's the only thing to do. Pull the place to pieces, till you find the body of the Cyprian cat. It will have my bullet in it.

THE PEACE OF MOWSLE BARTON

BY 'SAKI'

CREFTON LOCKYER SAT AT his ease, an ease alike of body and soul, in the little patch of ground, half-orchard and half-garden, that abutted on the farmyard at Mowsle Barton. After the stress and noise of long years of city life, the repose and peace of the hill-begirt homestead struck on his senses with an almost dramatic intensity. Time and space seemed to lose their meaning and their abruptness; the minutes slid away into hours, and the meadows and fallows sloped away into middle distance, softly and imperceptibly. Wild weeds of the hedgerow straggled into the flower-garden, and wall-flowers and garden bushes made counter-raids into farmyard and lane. Sleepy-looking hens and solemn preoccupied ducks were equally at home in yard, orchard, or roadway; nothing seemed to belong definitely to anywhere; even the gates were not necessarily to be found on their hinges. And over the whole scene brooded the sense of a peace that had almost a quality of magic in it. In the afternoon you felt that it had always been afternoon, and must always remain afternoon; in the twilight you

knew that it could never have been anything else but twilight. Crefton Lockyer sat at his ease in the rustic seat beneath an old medlar tree, and decided that here was the life-anchorage that his mind had so fondly pictured and that latterly his tired and jarred senses had so often pined for. He would make a permanent lodging-place among these simple friendly people, gradually increasing the modest comforts with which he would like to surround himself, but falling in as much as possible with their manner of living.

As he slowly matured this resolution in his mind an elderly woman came hobbling with uncertain gait through the orchard. He recognized her as a member of the farm household, the mother or possibly the mother-in-law of Mrs. Spurfield, his present landlady, and hastily formulated some pleasant remark to make to her. She forestalled him.

'There's a bit of writing chalked up on the door over yonder. What is it?'

She spoke in a dull impersonal manner, as though the question had been on her lips for years and had best be got rid of. Her eyes, however, looked impatiently over Crefton's head at the door of a small barn which formed the outpost of a straggling line of farm buildings.

'Martha Pillamon is an old witch,' was the announcement that met Crefton's inquiring scrutiny, and he hesitated a moment before giving the statement wider publicity. For all he knew to the contrary, it might be Martha herself to whom he was speaking. It was possible that Mrs. Spurfield's maiden name had been Pillamon. And the gaunt,

withered old dame at his side might certainly fulfil local conditions as to the outward aspect of a witch.

'It's something about someone called Martha Pillamon,' he explained cautiously.

'What does it say?'

'It's very disrespectful,' said Crefton; 'it says she's a witch. Such things ought not to be written up.'

'It's true, every word of it,' said his listener with considerable satisfaction, adding as a special descriptive note of her own, 'the old toad.'

And as she hobbled away through the farmyard she shrilled out in her cracked voice, 'Martha Pillamon is an old witch!'

'Did you hear what she said?' mumbled a weak, angry voice somewhere behind Crefton's shoulder. Turning hastily, he beheld another old crone, thin and yellow and wrinkled, and evidently in a high state of displeasure. Obviously this was Martha Pillamon in person. The orchard seemed to be a favourite promenade for the aged women of the neighbourhood.

''Tis lies, 'tis sinful lies,' the weak voice went on. ''Tis Betsy Croot is the old witch. She an' her daughter, the dirty rat. I'll put a spell on 'em, the old nuisances.'

As she limped slowly away her eye caught the chalk inscription on the barn door.

'What's written up there?' she demanded, wheeling round on Crefton.

'Vote for Soarker,' he responded, with the craven boldness of the practised peacemaker.

The old woman grunted, and her mutterings and her faded red shawl lost themselves gradually among the tree-trunks. Crefton rose presently and

made his way towards the farmhouse. Somehow a good deal of the peace seemed to have slipped out of the atmosphere.

The cheery bustle of tea-time in the old farm kitchen, which Crefton had found so agreeable on previous afternoons, seemed to have soured to-day into a certain uneasy melancholy. There was a dull, dragging silence around the board, and the tea itself, when Crefton came to taste it, was a flat, lukewarm concoction that would have driven the spirit of revelry out of a carnival.

'It's no use complaining of the tea,' said Mrs. Spurfield hastily, as her guest stared with an air of polite inquiry at his cup. 'The kettle won't boil, that's the truth of it.'

Crefton turned to the hearth, where an unusually fierce fire was banked up under a big black kettle, which sent a thin wreath of steam from its spout, but seemed otherwise to ignore the action of the roaring blaze beneath it.

'It's been there more than an hour, an' boil it won't,' said Mrs. Spurfield, adding, by way of complete explanation, 'we're bewitched.'

'It's Martha Pillamon as has done it,' chimed in the old mother; 'I'll be even with the old toad. I'll put a spell on her.'

'It must boil in time,' protested Crefton, ignoring the suggestions of foul influences. 'Perhaps the coal is damp.'

'It won't boil in time for supper, nor for breakfast to-morrow morning, not if you was to keep the fire a-going all night for it,' said Mrs. Spurfield. And it didn't. The household subsisted on fried and baked dishes, and a neighbour obligingly

brewed tea and sent it across in a moderately warm condition.

'I suppose you'll be leaving us, now that things has turned up uncomfortable,' Mrs. Spurfield observed at breakfast; 'there are folks as deserts one as soon as trouble comes.'

Crefton hurriedly disclaimed any immediate change of plans; he observed, however, to himself that the earlier heartiness of manner had in a large measure deserted the household. Suspicious looks, sulky silences, or sharp speeches had become the order of the day. As for the old mother, she sat about the kitchen or the garden all day, murmuring threats and spells against Martha Pillamon. There was something alike terrifying and piteous in the spectacle of these frail old morsels of humanity consecrating their last flickering energies to the task of making each other wretched. Hatred seemed to be the one faculty which had survived in undiminished vigour and intensity where all else was dropping into ordered and symmetrical decay. And the uncanny part of it was that some horrid unwholesome power seemed to be distilled from their spite and their cursings. No amount of sceptical explanation could remove the undoubted fact that neither kettle nor saucepan would come to boiling-point over the hottest fire. Crefton clung as long as possible to the theory of some defect in the coals, but a wood fire gave the same result, and when a small spirit-lamp kettle, which he ordered out by carrier, showed the same obstinate refusal to allow its contents to boil he felt that he had come suddenly into contact with some unguessed-at and very evil aspect of hidden forces. Miles away,

down through an opening in the hills, he could catch glimpses of a road where motor-cars sometimes passed, and yet here, so little removed from the arteries of the latest civilization, was a bat-haunted old homestead, where something unmistakably like witchcraft seemed to hold a very practical sway.

Passing out through the farm garden on his way to the lanes beyond, where he hoped to recapture the comfortable sense of peacefulness that was so lacking around house and hearth – especially hearth – Crefton came across the old mother, sitting mumbling to herself in the seat beneath the medlar tree. ' Let un sink as swims, let un sink as swims,' she was repeating over and over again, as a child repeats a half-learned lesson. And now and then she would break off into a shrill laugh, with a note of malice in it that was not pleasant to hear. Crefton was glad when he found himself out of earshot, in the quiet and seclusion of the deep overgrown lanes that seemed to lead away to nowhere; one, narrower and deeper than the rest, attracted his footsteps, and he was almost annoyed when he found that it really did act as a miniature roadway to a human dwelling. A forlorn-looking cottage with a scrap of ill-tended cabbage garden and a few aged apple trees stood at an angle where a swift-flowing stream widened out for a space into a decent-sized pond before hurrying away again through the willows that had checked its course. Crefton leaned against a tree-trunk and looked across the swirling eddies of the pond at the humble little homestead opposite him; the only sign of life came from a small procession of dingy-

looking ducks that marched in single file down to the water's edge. There is always something rather taking in the way a duck changes itself in an instant from a slow, clumsy waddler of the earth to a graceful, buoyant swimmer of the waters, and Crefton waited with a certain arrested attention to watch the leader of the file launch itself on to the surface of the pond. He was aware at the same time of a curious warning instinct that something strange and unpleasant was about to happen. The duck flung itself confidently forward into the water, and rolled immediately under the surface. Its head appeared for a moment and went under again, leaving a train of bubbles in its wake, while wings and legs churned the water in a helpless swirl of flapping and kicking. The bird was obviously drowning. Crefton thought at first that it had caught itself in some weeds, or was being attacked from below by a pike or water-rat. But no blood floated to the surface, and the wildly bobbing body made the circuit of the pond current without hindrance from any entanglement. A second duck had by this time launched itself into the pond, and a second struggling body rolled and twisted under the surface. There was something peculiarly piteous in the sight of the gasping beaks that showed now and again above the water, as though in terrified protest at this treachery of a trusted and familiar element. Crefton gazed with something like horror as a third duck poised itself on the bank and splashed in, to share the fate of the other two. He felt almost relieved when the remainder of the flock, taking tardy alarm from the commotion of the slowly drowning bodies, drew

themselves up with tense outstretched necks, and sidled away from the scene of danger, quacking a deep note of disquietude as they went. At the same moment Crefton became aware that he was not the only human witness of the scene; a bent and withered old woman, whom he recognized at once as Martha Pillamon, of sinister reputation, had limped down the cottage path to the water's edge, and was gazing fixedly at the gruesome whirligig of dying birds that went in horrible procession round the pool. Presently her voice rang out in a shrill note of quavering rage:

' 'Tis Betsy Croot adone it, the old rat. I'll put a spell on her, see if I don't.'

Crefton slipped quietly away, uncertain whether or no the old woman had noticed his presence. Even before she had proclaimed the guiltiness of Betsy Croot, the latter's muttered incantation ' Let un sink as swims ' had flashed uncomfortably across his mind. But it was the final threat of a retaliatory spell which crowded his mind with misgiving to the exclusion of all other thoughts or fancies. His reasoning powers could no longer afford to dismiss these old-wives' threats as empty bickerings. The household at Mowsle Barton lay under the displeasure of a vindictive old woman who seemed able to materialize her personal spites in a very practical fashion, and there was no saying what form her revenge for three drowned ducks might not take. As a member of the household Crefton might find himself involved in some general and highly disagreeable visitation of Martha Pillamon's wrath. Of course he knew that he was giving way to absurd fancies, but the behaviour of the spirit-

lamp kettle and the subsequent scene at the pond had considerably unnerved him. And the vagueness of his alarm added to its terrors; when once you have taken the Impossible into your calculations its possibilities become practically limitless.

Crefton rose at his usual early hour the next morning, after one of the least restful nights he had spent at the farm. His sharpened senses quickly detected that subtle atmosphere of things-being-not-altogether well that hangs over a stricken household. The cows had been milked, but they stood huddled about in the yard, waiting impatiently to be driven out afield, and the poultry kept up an importunate querulous reminder of deferred feeding-time; the yard pump, which usually made discordant music at frequent intervals during the early morning, was to-day ominously silent. In the house itself there was a coming and going of scuttering footsteps, a rushing and dying away of hurried voices, and long, uneasy stillnesses. Crefton finished his dressing and made his way to the head of a narrow staircase. He could hear a dull, complaining voice, a voice into which an awed hush had crept, and recognized the speaker as Mrs. Spurfield.

'He'll go away, for sure,' the voice was saying; 'there are those as runs away from one as soon as real misfortune shows itself.'

Crefton felt that he probably was one of 'those,' and that there were moments when it was advisable to be true to type.

He crept back to his room, collected and packed his few belongings, placed the money due for his lodgings on a table, and made his way out by a

back door into the yard. A mob of poultry surged expectantly towards him; shaking off their interested attentions he hurried along under cover of cow-stall, piggery, and hayricks till he reached the lane at the back of the farm. A few minutes' walk, which only the burden of his portmanteaux restrained from developing into an undisguised run, brought him to a main road, where the early carrier soon overtook him and sped him onward to the neighbouring town. At a bend of the road he caught a last glimpse of the farm; the old gabled roofs and thatched barns, the straggling orchard, and the medlar tree, with its wooden seat, stood out with an almost spectral clearness in the early morning light, and over it all brooded that air of magic possession which Crefton had once mistaken for peace.

The bustle and roar of Paddington Station smote on his ears with a welcome protective greeting.

'Very bad for our nerves, all this rush and hurry,' said a fellow-traveller; 'give me the peace and quiet of the country.'

Crefton mentally surrendered his share of the desired commodity. A crowded, brilliantly overlighted music-hall, where an exuberant rendering of '1812' was being given by a strenuous orchestra, came nearest to his ideal of a nerve sedative.

IV
LYCANTHROPY

I

THE WEREWOLF

BY DR. MONTAGUE SUMMERS

Pescara. Pray-thee, what's his disease?
Doctor. A very pestilent disease, my lord,
They call it licanthropia.
Pescara. What's that?
I need a dictionary to't.
Doctor. I'll tell you:
In those that are possess'd with't there oreflowes
Such mellencholly humour, they imagine
Themselves to be transformed into woolves,
Steale forth to church-yards in the dead of night,
And dig dead bodies up: as two nights since
One met the duke, 'bout midnight in a lane
Behind St. Markes church, with the leg of a man

Upon his shoulder; and he howled feare-
fully:
Said he was a woolffe: only the difference
Was, a woolffes skin was hairy on the out-
side,
His on the in-side: bad them take their
swords,
Rip up his flesh, and trie.

Webster: The Dutchesse of Malfy.

I

THE WEREWOLF

(Extracts from Dr. Montague Summers's book)

AS OLD AS time and as wide as the world, the belief in the werewolf by its very antiquity and its universality affords accumulated evidence that there is at least some extremely significant and vital element of truth in this dateless tradition, however disguised and distorted it may have become in later days by the fantasies and poetry of epic sagas, roundel, and romance. The ultimate origins of the werewolf are indeed obscure and lost in the mists of primeval mythology, and when we endeavour to track the slot too far we presently find ourselves mused and amazed, driven to hazard and profitless conjecture, unless we are sensible enough to recognize and candid enough to acknowledge the dark and terrible mysteries, both psychic and physical, which are implicated in and essentially permeate a catena of evidence past dispute, and which alone can adequately explain or account for the prominence and the survival of those cruel narratives

which have come down to us throughout the centuries, and the facts of which are being repeated to-day in the evil-haunted depths of African jungles, and even in remoter hamlets of Europe, farmy woods and mountain vales, almost divorced from the ken of man and wellnigh unvisited by civilization.

Precisely to define the werewolf is perhaps not altogether easy. We may, however, say that a werewolf is a human being, man, woman, or child (more often the first), who either voluntarily or involuntarily changes or is metamorphosed into the apparent shape of a wolf, and who is then possessed of all the characteristics, the foul appetites, ferocity, cunning, the brute strength, and swiftness of that animal. In by far the greater majority of instances the werewolf to himself as well as to those who behold him seems completely to have assumed the furry lupine form. This shape-shifting is for the most part temporary, of longer or shorter duration, but it is sometimes supposed to be permanent. The transformation, again, such as it is, if desired, can be effected by certain rites and ceremonies, which in the case of a constitutional werewolf are often of the black goetic kind. The resumption of the original form may then be wrought at will. Werewolfery is hereditary or acquired; a horrible pleasure born of the thirst to quaff warm human blood, or an ensorcelling punishment and revenge of the dark Ephesian art.

It is amply evident from the etymological history of the word ' werewolf,' with its many cognates and equivalents in every European language, that the tradition is not only most anciently and univer-

sally diffused throughout the whole of this great continent, but that it has further indelibly impressed itself upon the common speech and struck deep into the imagination of the Western peoples. Nor is it merely a grim superstition; it is a terrible and dangerous truth, and one, moreover, which is by no means confined to Europe alone. A serious belief in some metamorphosis or transformation may be found over the whole wide world. It is not necessarily a change into the wolf, for there are records in other countries of shape-shifting to a very wide variety of animals. In Northern Europe the shape thus assumed was called *hamr;* the process of changing *at skipta homum* or *at hamz;* the travelling in such a form *hamfarir;* and the supernatural strength acquired by such metamorphosis *hamremmi.* But it must be carefully borne in mind that the soul remains unchanged, and that therefore the eye, which is the mirror of the soul, is also unchanged.

In order then to satisfy his lust for blood, his desire to hurt, harm, and kill, to terrify and amaze, the witch, the bond-slave of Satan, by his master's evil power and hellish craft transforms or seems to transform himself into the shape of some ravening beast of prey, and naturally enough this animal will be that most commonly met with in the district where the varlet inhabits. This explains clearly enough and logically enough why the werewolf is rare to-day, why ' there can nowhere be a living belief in contemporary metamorphosis into any animal which has ceased to exist in the particular locality.' The distinctive features of the wolf are unbridled cruelty, bestial ferocity, and

ravening hunger. His strength, his cunning, his speed, were regarded as abnormal, almost eerie qualities, he had something of the demon, of hell. He is the symbol of Night and Winter, of Stress and Storm, the dark and mysterious harbinger of Death.

In Holy Writ the wolf is ever the emblem of treachery, savagery, and bloodthirstiness. The evening wolves, says the learned Cornelius a Lapide, are demons, who verily prowl abroad in the dark hours, and urge man to every kind of lust and murder, and to other infinite crimes.

We now approach a very important point in the study of the Werewolf. When a man is metamorphosised into a wolf, or any other animal form whatsoever it may be, is there an actual, corporeal, and material change, or else is the shape-shifting fantastical, although none the less real and substantially apparent to the man himself and to those who behold him; and if it be thus simulated and illusory how is the phenomenon accomplished?

The famous Jean Bodin, who devotes the sixth chapter of the second book of his *De la Demonomanie des Sorciers* (Paris, 1580) to a study of lycanthropy – *De la Lycathropie et si le Diable peut changer les hommes en bestes* – gives it as his opinion that the demon can really and materially metamorphose the body of a man into that of an animal, only he cannot change and alter the human understanding. There are, it is true, other learned and weighty writers who have maintained that (under God) the Devil has power actually to change a human being corporeally into a wolf or some other animal, but it was Bodin who was universally regarded and so violently attacked as the chief

exponent of this argument.

From whatever cause this shape-shifting may arise, it is very certain by the common consent of all antiquity and all history, by the testimony of learned men, by experience and first-hand witness, that werewolfism which involves some change of form from man to animal is a very real and a very terrible thing. (It cannot, of course, take place without the exercise of black magic.)

The werewolf is a sorcerer well versed and of long continuance in the Devil's service, no mere journeyman of evil.

II

THE METAMORPHOSIS

IN THE FIRST PLACE, the sorcerer strips himself mother-naked. In certain obscure magical rites nudity was required. The witch of whom Giovanni Battista Porta speaks cast aside all her clothes before she smeared her limbs with fatty grease as a preparation for her journey to the sabbat. The Four Witches, as portrayed by Durer, are naked for the sabbat orgy, as also are the witches in the celebrated pictures by Hans Balding, who depicts the confection of the witches' salve, the anointing of the brooms, and the horrid crew in full flight to their Satanic synagogue. Jaspar Isaac, in his *L'Abomination des Sorciers,* portrays these abandoned ministers and slaves of the demon divesting themselves of their garments in hot haste to repair to a nocturnal rendezvous. Equally elaborate is the detail in Frans Francken's *An Assembly of Witches,* where

the women are undressing for their dark revels, and one naked witch is already being anointed. Teniers and Queverdo, in their several pictures *Le Depart pour le Sabat,* have drawn nude witches at the moment they commence their diabolic transvection, whilst Goya's *La Transformation des Sorciers* shows us four hideous naked warlocks, one of whom, already metamorphosed to a wolf, is about to take his flight by the chimney, through whose yawning aperture is fast disappearing yet another of the foul fraternity.

In one of the most famous of the werewolf trials, that of Pierre Bourgot and Michel Verdun in December, 1521, by Frere Jean Boin, O.P. Prior of the house of Poligny and General Inquisitor for the diocese of Besançon, Pierre Bourgot confessed that in order to effect the shape-shifting into a wolf's form, he cast off his clothes and anointed his naked body with the mysterious salve.

The unguent used by the werewolf was, according to Weyer, that employed by witches in their transvection. Weyer gives the condiment of these unguents in his *De Lamiis, III, 17.* The first liniment, then, is composed of the fat of young children seethed in a brazen vessel until it becomes thick and slab, and then scummed. With this are mixed *eleoselinum,* hemlock; *aconitum,* aconite; *frondes populeæ,* poplar leaves; and *fuligo,* soot.

The second formula is: *sium,* cowbane; *acorum uulgare,* sweet flag; *pentaphyllon,* cinquefoil; *uespertilioris sanguis,* bats blood; *solanum somniferum,* deadly nightshade; and *oleum,* oil.

Dr. H. J. Norman informs me that these witches' concoctions could of themselves have no effect.

The spells recited by the sorcerer about to shift his shape to a werewolf are profane and horrible in the last degree. To inquire into these were impious; they were accursed to know. Unfortunately some such mantras have been preserved in ancient grimoires and evangels of Satan, which I will not specify too nearly. As Boguet tells us, witches can, indeed, cause injury by mere words and uttered spells, for barbaric jingle and meaningless though the phrases be, they are none the less a potent and energetic symbol of the pact between the witch and Satan. Yet, be it remarked, the sounds and syllables have not of themselves, when spoken by another, the power to hurt and kill, neither has the mere spell a malign quality of itself to shift the human shape into bestial form.

The transformation was sometimes effected by donning a girdle made of the pelt of the animal whose shape was to be assumed, or else made of human skin, which must be that of a murderer or some criminal gibbeted or broken on the wheel for his offences. The girth was three fingers wide.

Peter Stump, who was condemned for werewolfism in 1590, confessed that the demon had bestowed a girdle upon him, with which he girt himself when the lust came upon him to shift his shape to a wolf.

The wolf-girdle passed into common tradition, and was perhaps in the opinion of the vulgar, the most usual way (after the magical ointment) of shape-shifting.

It may now be asked how the removal of the shape was effected and the return to the human form duly accomplished. By divesting himself of the girdle the sorcerer was able to recover his man's body,

and the glamour dispersed. The lycanthropes whom Bodin tried said 'that when they wished to resume their former shape, they rolled in the dew or washed themselves with water.' This agrees with Sprenger's statement that a man who has been changed into a beast loses that shape when he is bathed in running water.

Exorcism and, above all, the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, will disperse all glamour and objectively restore to human shape those upon whom an evil spell of fascination and metamorphosis has been cast.

Not without reason did the werewolf in past centuries appear as one of the most terrible and depraved of all bond-slaves of Satan. He was, even whilst in human form, a creature within whom the beast – and not without prevailing – struggled with the man. Masqued and clad in the shape of the most dreaded and fiercest denizen of the forest, the witch came forth under cover of darkness, prowling in lonely places, to seek his prey. By the force of his diabolic pact he was enabled, owing to a ritual of horrid ointments and impious spells, to assume so cunningly the swift shaggy brute that save by his demoniac ferocity and superhuman strength none could distinguish him from the natural wolf. The werewolf loved to tear raw human flesh. He lapped the blood of his mangled victims, and with gorged reeking belly he bore the warm offal of their palpitating entrails to the sabbat to present in homage and foul sacrifice to the Monstrous Goat who sat upon the throne of worship and adoration. His appetites were depraved beyond humanity. In bestial rut he covered the fierce she-wolves amid

their bosky lairs. If he were attacked and sore wounded, if a limb, a paw or ear were lopped, perforce he must regain his human shape, and he fled to some cover to conceal these fearful transformations, where man broke through the shell of beast in horrid confusion. The human body was maimed or wounded in that numerical place where the beast had been hurt. By this were his bedevilments not unseldom betrayed, he was recognised and brought to justice.

Hateful to God and loathed by man, what other end, what other reward could he look for than the stake, where they burned him quick, and scattered his ashes to the wind, to be swept away to nothingness and oblivion on the keen wings of the tramontane and the nightly storm.

III

THE PRACTICE OF WEREWOLFERY

IN DECEMBER, 1521, at Poligny, Pierre Bourgot, known as 'Gros Pierre', and Michel Verdun, were tried before Maitre Jean Boin, O.P., S.T.D., Prior of the Dominican convent at Poligny and Inquisitor General for the diocese of Besançon. Day after day the Court was thronged. Pierre Bourgot confessed that nineteen years before, on the day of Poligny Fair, whilst owing to a great storm of thunder and hail he was collecting his flocks, there met him in a lonely place three hordemen clothed in black, riding black steeds. Of these one accosted him, asking what ailed him. He replied his flocks

were lost and he feared they should fall aprey to wild beasts. The man – or rather demon – then said that if he would acknowledge and serve him as his lord and master not one sheep should be missing. He accepted the proposal and agreed to meet him a sennight after to seal the bond. This he did, and kneeling before the demon in homage, vowed to obey him, renouncing God, Our Lady, all the Company of Heaven, his Baptism and Chrism. He swore also never to assist at Holy Mass, nor yet to use Holy Water. He then kissed the demon's left hand, which was black and cold as the hand of a corpse. The Demon promised Pierre money, and bade the shepherd call upon him by the name of Moyset. How be it as the years went by he grew weary of his allegiance, to which he was recalled by Michel Verdun of Plane, a village near Poligny, and he attended a sabbat of warlocks in a wood near Chateau Charlou. Michel bade him strip naked and then anointed him from head to foot with a certain unguent, after which he seemed to himself to be changed into a wolf, his limbs were hairy, his hands and feet the paws of a beast. In running his speed was that of the wind. Michel, who also shifted his shape, accompanied him with surpassing fleetness. The unguent was given to Pierre by Moyset: and to Michel by his familiar, Guillemin. After these courses Pierre felt an intense weariness.

In the shape of wolves Pierre and Michel attacked and tore to pieces a boy of seven years old. An outcry was raised and they fled. On another occasion they killed a woman who was gathering peas. They also seized a little girl of four years old and ate the

palpitating flesh, all save one arm. Several other persons were murdered by them in this way, for they loved to lap up the warm flowing blood. On one occasion Pierre, with his keen white teeth, tore out the throat of a girl aged about nine, whom they assaulted in a vineyard. Other hideous crimes did they confess, and especially that they had frequently covered she-wolves, taking more pleasure in this coupling than in the natural entering of women.

Associated with Pierre Bourgot and Verdun was a third werewolf named Philibert Montot. All three were duly executed for their hideous crimes and sorceries.

A story is related of an incident which occurred about the year 1530, concerning an old chateau near Poitiers, which was very ill reputed as the rendezvous of sorcerers and demons. Three young men, more rash than cautious, resolved out of a great curiosity to investigate the matter. One Friday at midnight, they very secretly repaired to the place, and through a chink of a shuttered window they were witnesses of the abominations of the sabbat. When they sought to fly they were beset by three huge wolves. With difficulty they escaped, and one of them, in the fray, Malchused the beast who was biting him. On the following day it came to his knowledge that a lewd woman of the town, long suspect of witchcraft, was ill in her bed, her ear having been recently sliced off by a sword.

In 1558 occurred a case of werewolfism to which reference is often (but for the most part somewhat incorrectly) made.

One evening a landed gentleman, whose chateau

was near a village about two leagues from Apchon, in the highlands Auvergne, met a huntsman whom he knew well, and whom he asked to bring him some of the bag on his return. As the huntsman went along a valley he was attacked by a large wolf. Since his arquebus missed aim he was obliged to grapple with the beast, which he caught by the ears. By a dexterous feat, however, he managed to draw his keen knife and severed one of the wolf's paws, which he put in his pouch as the beast fled howling. He then took his way back, passing near the gentleman's chateau, which was actually in sight of the spot where he encountered the wolf. As he told his friend the tale he drew the paw from his pouch, and found therein no paw but a woman's hand with a gold ring upon one of the fingers, a jewel the gentleman immediately recognized as belonging to his wife. With deadly fear in his heart he entered the house to find his wife ill, nursing a bandaged arm. When compelled to show her wound it was seen that she had lost a hand, upon which she confessed that in the form of a wolf she had attacked the hunter. Not long after she was burned at Ryon. This was told to Boguet by one who had stayed at that very place a fortnight after the thing had happened, so there can be no question as to the actual truth of the occurrence.

It was in 1584 that Benoist Bidel of Naizan, a lad some sixteen years old, and his young sister were attacked, whilst plucking wild fruit, by a huge wolf without a tail. Some peasants hastened to their assistance, but the boy had already received his death from the claws and teeth of the animal,

which in its turn was killed by those who ran up, and in its last throes crawled behind a thicket, where, when it was followed, they discovered no wolf but the dead body of Perreette Gandillon. Soon after this, the woman's brother, Pierre Gandillon, and his son George, were accused of witchcraft, and it presently came out that they were in the habit of anointing themselves with the Devil's unguent and assuming the form and fierceness of wolves, under which shape they had murdered and eaten many young children. Both reaped the full reward of their crimes and perished at the stake.

On the 14th December, 1598, at Paris, a tailor of Chalons was sentenced to be burned alive for his horrible crimes. This wretch was wont to decoy children of both sexes into his shop, and having abused them, he would slice their throats and then powder and dress their bodies, jointing them as a butcher cuts up meat. In the twilight, under the shape of a wolf, he roamed the woods to leap out on stray passers-by and tear their throats to shreds. Barrels of bleaching bones were found concealed in his cellars, as well as other foul and hideous things. He died unrepentant and blaspheming. So scabrous were the details of the case that the Court ordered all the documents to be burned.

In 1604 a peasant of a hamlet near Lucerne, encountering a fierce wolf on a lonely road was attacked, howbeit he defended himself so well that he struck off the animal's front leg. The beast crawled away, but on being followed a woman was discovered bleeding profusely with her arm severed. She was brought to justice and burned.

De Lancre tells us that the reason why the Devil is more ready to change the sorcerer into a wolf than to any other animal is owing to the natural ferocity of the wolf, who ravages and devours, who does more harm to man than any other marauder animal in his kind. Moreover, the wolf typifies the eternal enemy of the lamb, and by the Lamb is symbolized Our Lord and the Saviour Jesus Christ.

All werewolves – I do not speak of the involuntary ensorcelled transformations – are witches, and therefore all werewolves will be found to be branded with the Devil's mark.

THE TOMB OF SARAH

BY F. G. LORING

MY FATHER WAS THE head of a celebrated firm of church restorers and decorators about sixty years ago. He took a keen interest in his work, and made an especial study of any old legends or family histories that came under his observation. He was necessarily very well read and thoroughly well posted in all questions of folk-lore and medieval legend. As he kept a careful record of every case he investigated the manuscripts he left at his death have a special interest. From amongst them I have selected the following, as being a particularly weird and extraordinary experience. In presenting it to the public I feel it is superfluous to apologize for its supernatural character.

MY FATHER'S DIARY

1841. 17*th June*. Received a commission from my old friend, Peter Grant, to enlarge and restore the chancel of his church at Hagarstone, in the wilds of the west country.

5*th July*. Went down to Hagarstone with my head man, Somers. A very long and tiring journey.

7th July. Got the work well started. The old church is one of special interest to the antiquarian, and I shall endeavour while restoring it to alter the existing arrangements as little as possible. One large tomb, however, must be moved bodily ten feet at least to the southward. Curiously enough there is a somewhat forbidding inscription upon it in Latin, and I am sorry that this particular tomb should have to be moved. It stands amongst the graves of the Kenyons, an old family which has been extinct in these parts for centuries. The inscription on it runs thus:

SARAH
1630
For the sake of the dead and the welfare of the living, let this sepulchre remain untouched and its occupant undisturbed until the Coming of Christ.
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

8th July. Took counsel with Grant concerning the 'Sarah Tomb.' We are both very loth to disturb it, but the ground has sunk so beneath it that the safety of the church is in danger; thus we have no choice. However, the work shall be done as reverently as possible under our own direction.

Grant says there is a legend in the neighbourhood that it is the tomb of the last of the Kenyons, the evil Countess Sarah, who was murdered in 1630. She lived quite alone in the old castle, whose ruins still stand three miles from here on the road to Bristol. Her reputation was an evil one even for

those days. She was a witch or were-woman, the only companion of her solitude being a familiar in the shap of a huge Asiatic wolf. This creature was reputed to seize upon children, or failing these, sheep and other small animals, and convey them to the castle, where the countess used to suck their blood. It was popularly supposed that she could never be killed. This, however, proved a fallacy, since she was strangled one day by a mad peasant woman who had lost two children, she declaring that they had both been seized and carried off by the countess's familiar. This is a very interesting story, since it points to a local supersition very similar to that of the vampire, existing in Slavonic and Hugarian Europe.

The tomb is built of black marble, surmounted by an enormous slab of the same material. On the slab is a magnificent group of figures. A young and handsome woman reclines upon a couch; round her neck is a piece of rope, the end of which she holds in her hand. At her side is a gigantic dog with bared fangs and lolling tongue. The face of the reclining figure is a cruel one: the corners of the mouth are curiously lifted, showing the sharp points of long canine or dog teeth. The whole group, though magnificently executed, leaves a most unpleasant sensation.

If we move the tomb it will have to be done in two pieces, the covering slab first and then the tomb proper. We have decided to remove the covering slab to-morrow.

9*th July*. 6 p.m. A very strange day.

By noon everything was ready for lifting off the covering stone, and after the men's dinner we

started the jacks and pulleys. The slab lifted easily enough, though it fitted closely into its seat and was further secured by some sort of mortar or putty, which must have kept the interior perfectly air-tight.

None of us was prepared for the horrible rush of foul, mouldy air that escaped as the cover lifted clear of its seating. And the contents that gradually came into view were more startling still. There lay the fully dressed body of a woman, wizened and shrunk and ghastly pale as if from starvation. Round her neck was a loose cord, and, judging by the scars still visible, the story of death by strangulation was true enough.

The most horrible part, however, was the extraordinary freshness of the body. Except for the appearance of starvation, life might have been only just extinct. The flesh was soft and white, the eyes were wide open and seemed to stare at us with a fearful understanding in them. The body itself lay on mould, without any pretence to coffin or shell.

For several moments we gazed with horrible curiosity, and then it became too much for my workmen, who implored us to replace the covering slab. That, of course, we would not do; but I set the carpenters to work at once to make a temporary cover while we moved the tomb to its new position. This is a long job, and will take two or three days at least.

9 p.m. Just at sunset we were startled by the howling of, seemingly, every dog in the village. It lasted for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, and then ceased as suddenly as it began. This, and a curious mist that has risen round the church, makes me

feel rather anxious about the 'Sarah Tomb.' According to the best established traditions of the vampire-haunted countries, the disturbance of dogs or wolves at sunset is supposed to indicate the presence of one of these fiends, and local fog is always considered to be a certain sign. The vampire has the power of producing it for the purpose of concealing its movements near its hiding-place at any time.

I dare not mention or even hint my fears to the rector, for he is, not unnaturally perhaps, a rank disbeliever in many things that I know, from experience, are not only possible but even probable. I must work this out alone at first, and get his aid without his knowing in what direction he is helping me. I shall now watch till midnight at least.

10.15 p.m. As I feared and half expected. Just before ten there was another outburst of the hideous howling. It was commenced most distinctly by a particularly horrible and blood-curdling wail from the vicinity of the churchyard. The chorus lasted only a few minutes, however, and at the end of it I saw a large dark shape, like a huge dog, emerge from the fog and lope away at a rapid canter towards the open country. Assuming this to be what I fear, I shall see it return soon after midnight.

12.30 a.m. I was right. Almost as midnight struck I saw the beast returning. It stopped at the spot where the fog seemed to commence, and, lifting up its head, gave tongue to that particularly horrible long-drawn wail that I had noticed as preceding the outburst earlier in the evening.

To-morrow I shall tell the rector what I have seen; and if, as I expect, we hear of some neigh-

bouring sheepfold having been raided, I shall get him to watch with me for this nocturnal marauder. I shall also examine the 'Sarah Tomb' for something which he may notice without any previous hint from me.

10*th July*. I found the workmen this morning much disturbed in mind about the howling of the dogs. 'We doan't like it, zur,' one of the said to me, 'we doan't like it; there was summat abroad last night that was unholy.' They were still more uncomfortable when the news came round that a large dog had made a raid upon a flock of sheep, scattering them far and wide, and leaving three of them dead with torn throats in the field.

When I told the rector of what I had seen and what was being said in the village, he immediately decided that we must try and catch or at least identify the beast I had seen. 'Of course,' he said, 'it is some dog lately imported into the neighbourhood, for I know of nothing about here nearly as large as the animal you describe, though its size may be due to the deceptive moonlight.'

This afternoon I asked the rector, as a favour, to assist me in lifting the temporary cover that was on the tomb, giving as an excuse the reason that I wished to obtain a portion of the curious mortar with which it had been sealed. After a slight demur he consented, and we raised the lid. If the sight that met our eyes gave me a shock, at least it appalled Grant.

'Great God!' he exclaimed; 'the woman is alive!'

And so it seemed for a moment. The corpse had lost much of its starved appearance and looked hideously fresh and alive. It was still wrinkled and

shrunken, but the lips were firm, and of the rich red hue of health. The eyes, if possible, were more appalling than ever, though fixed and staring. At one corner of the mouth I thought I noticed a slight dark-coloured froth, but I said nothing about it then.

'Take your piece of mortar, Harry,' gasped Grant, 'and let us shut the tomb again. God help me! Parson though I am, such dead faces frighten me!'

Nor was I sorry to hide that terrible face again; but I got my bit of mortar, and I have advanced a step towards the solution of the mystery.

This afternoon the tomb was moved several feet towards its new position, but it will be two or three days yet before we shall be ready to replace the slab.

10.15 p.m. Again the same howling at sunset, the same fog enveloping the church, and at ten o'clock the same great beast slipping silently out into the open country. I must get the rector's help and watch for its return. But precautions we must take, for if things are as I believe, we take our lives in our hands when we venture out into the night to waylay the – vampire. Why not admit it at once? For that the beast I have seen is the vampire of that evil thing in the tomb I can have no reasonable doubt.

Not yet come to its full strength, thank Heaven! after the starvation of nearly two centuries, for at present it can only maraud as wolf apparently. But, in a day or two, when full power returns, that dreadful woman in new strength and beauty will be able to leave her refuge. Then it would not be sheep merely that would satisfy her disgusting lust

for blood, but victims that would yield their life-blood without a murmur to her caressing touch – victims that, dying of her foul embrace, themselves must become vampires in their turn to prey on others.

Mercifully my knowledge gives me a safeguard; for that little piece of mortar that I rescued to-day from the tomb contains a portion of the sacred host, and who holds it, humbly and firmly believing in its virtue, may pass safely through such an ordeal as I intend to submit myself and the rector to to-night.

12.30 a.m. Our adventure is over for the present, and we are back safe.

After writing the last entry recorded above, I went off to find Grant and tell him that the marauder was out on the prowl again. 'But, Grant,' I said, 'before we start out to-night I must insist that you will let me prosecute this affair in my own way; you must promise to put yourself completely under my orders, without asking any questions as to the why and wherefore.'

After a little demur, and some excusable chaff on his part at the serious view I was taking of what he called a 'dog hunt,' he gave me his promise. I then told him that we were to watch to-night and try to track the mysterious beast, but not to interfere with it in any way. I think, in spite of his jests, that I impressed him with the fact that there might be, after all, good reason for my precautions.

It was just after eleven when we stepped out into the still night.

Our first move was to try to penetrate the dense fog round the church, but there was something so

chilly about it, and a faint smell so disgustingly rank and loathsome, that neither our nerves nor our stomachs were proof against it. Instead, we stationed ourselves in the dark shadow of a yew-tree that commanded a good view of the wicket entrance to the churchyard.

At midnight the howling of the dogs began again, and in a few minutes we saw a large grey shape, with green eyes shining like lamps, shamble swiftly down the path towards us.

The rector started forward, but I laid a firm hand upon his arm and whispered a warning: 'Remember!' Then we both stood very still and watched as the great beast cantered swiftly by. It was real enough, for we could hear the clicking of its nails on the stone flags. It passed within a few yards of us, and seemed to be nothing more nor less than a great grey wolf, thin and gaunt, with bristling hair and dripping jaws. It stopped where the mist commenced, and turned round. It was truly a horrible sight, and made one's blood run cold. The eyes burnt like fires, the upper lip was snarling and raised, showing the great canine teeth, while round the mouth clung and dripped a dark-coloured froth.

It raised its head and gave tongue to its long wailing howl, which was answered from afar by the village dogs. After standing for a few moments it turned and disappeared into the thickest part of the fog.

Very shortly afterwards the atmosphere began to clear, and within ten minutes the mist was all gone, the dogs in the village were silent, and the night seemed to reassume its normal aspect. We ex-

amined the spot where the beast had been standing and found, plainly enough upon the stone flags, dark spots of froth and saliva.

'Well, rector,' I said, 'will you admit now, in view of the things you have seen to-day, in consideration of the legend, the woman in the tomb, the fog, the howling dogs, and, last but not least, the mysterious beast you have seen so close, that there is something not quite normal in it all? Will you put yourself unreservedly in my hands and help me, *whatever I may do,* first to make assurance doubly sure, and finally to take the necessary steps for putting an end to this horror of the night?' I saw that the uncanny influence of the night was strong upon him, and wished to impress it as much as possible.

'Needs must,' he replied, 'when the Devil drives; and in the face of what I have seen I must believe that some unholy forces are at work. Yet, how can they work in the sacred precincts of a church? Shall we not call rather upon Heaven to assist us in our need?'

'Grant,' I said solemnly, 'that we must do, each in his own way. God helps those who help themselves, and by His help and the light of my knowledge we must fight this battle for Him and the poor lost soul within.'

We then returned to the rectory and to our rooms, though I have sat up to write this account while the scene is fresh in my mind.

11*th July.* Found the workmen again very much disturbed in their minds, and full of a strange dog that had been seen during the night by several people, who had hunted it. Farmer Stotman, who

had been watching his sheep (the same flock that had been raided the night before), had surprised it over a fresh carcass and tried to drive it off, but its size and fierceness so alarmed him that he had beaten a hasty retreat for a gun. When he returned the animal was gone, though he found that three more sheep from his flock were dead and torn.

The 'Sarah Tomb' was moved to-day to its new position; but it was a long, heavy business, and there was not time to replace the covering slab. For this I was glad, as in the prosaic light of day the rector almost disbelieves the events of the night, and is prepared to think everything to have been magnified and distorted by our imagination.

As, however, I could not possibly proceed with my war of extermination against this foul thing without assistance, and as there is nobody else I can rely upon, I appealed to him for one more night – to convince him that it was no delusion, but a ghastly, horrible truth, which must be fought and conquered for our own sakes, as well as that of all those living in the neighbourhood.

'Put yourself in my hands, rector,' I said, 'for to-night at least. Let us take those precautions which my study of the subject tells me are the right ones. To-night you and I must watch in the church; and I feel assured that to-morrow you will be as convinced as I am, and be equally prepared to take those awful steps which I know to be proper, and I must warn you that we shall find a more startling change in the body lying there than you noticed yesterday.

My words came true; for on raising the wooden cover once more the rank stench of a slaughter-

house arose, making us feel positively sick. There lay the vampire, but how changed from the starved and shrunken corpse we saw two days ago for the first time! The wrinkles had almost disappeared, the flesh was firm and full, the crimson lips grinned horribly over the long pointed teeth, and a distinct smear of blood had trickled down one corner of the mouth. We set our teeth, however, and hardened our hearts. Then we replaced the cover and put what we had collected into a safe place in the vestry. Yet even now Grant could not believe that there was any real or pressing danger concealed in that awful tomb, as he raised strenuous objections to any apparent desecration of the body without further proof. This he shall have to-night. God grant that I am not taking too much on myself! If there is any truth in old legends it would be easy enough to destroy the vampire now; but Grant will not have it.

I hope for the best of this night's work, but the danger in waiting is very great.

6 p.m. I have prepared everything: the sharp knives, the pointed stake, fresh garlic, and the wild dog-roses. All these I have taken and concealed in the vestry, where we can get at them when our solemn vigil commences.

If either or both of us die with our fearful task undone, let those reading my record see that this is done. I lay it upon them as a solemn obligation. 'That the vampire be pierced through the heart with the stake, then let the burial service be read over the poor clay at last released from its doom. Thus shall the vampire cease to be, and a lost soul rest.'

12th July. All is over. After the most terrible night of watching and horror, one vampire at least will trouble the world no more. But how thankful should we be to a merciful Providence that that awful tomb was not disturbed by any one not having the knowledge necessary to deal with its dreadful occupant! I write this with no feelings of self-complacency, but simply with a great gratitude for the years of study I have been able to devote to this subject.

And now to my tale.

Just before sunset last night the rector and I locked ourselves into the church, and took up our position in the pulpit. It was one of those pulpits, to be found in some churches, which is entered from the vestry, the preacher appearing at a good height through an arched opening in the wall. This gave us a sense of security (which we felt we needed), a good view of the interior, and direct access to the implements which I had concealed in the vestry.

The sun set and the twilight gradually deepened and faded. There was, so far, no sign of the usual fog, nor any howling of the dogs. At nine o'clock the moon rose, and her pale light gradually flooded the aisles, and still no sign of any kind from the 'Sarah Tomb.' The rector had asked me several times what he might expect, but I was determined that no words or thought of mine should influence him, and that he should be convinced by his own senses alone.

By half-past ten we were both getting very tired, and I began to think that perhaps after all we should see nothing that night. However, soon after

eleven we observed a light mist rising from the 'Sarah Tomb.' It seemed to scintillate and sparkle as it rose, and curled in a sort of pillar or spiral.

I said nothing, but I heard the rector give a sort of gasp as he clutched my arm feverishly. 'Great Heaven!' he whispered, 'it is taking shape.'

And, true enough, in a very few moments we saw standing erect by the tomb the ghastly figure of the Countess Sarah!

She looked thin and haggard still, and her face was deadly white; but the crimson lips looked like a hideous gash in the pale cheeks, and her eyes glared like red coals in the gloom of the church.

It was a fearful thing to watch as she stepped unsteadily down the aisle, staggering a little as if from weakness and exhaustion. This was perhaps natural, as her body must have suffered much physically from her long incarceration, in spite of the unholy forces which kept it fresh and well.

We watched her to the door, and wondered what would happen; but it appeared to present no difficulty, for she melted through it and disappeared.

'Now, Grant,' I said, 'do you believe?'

'Yes,' he replied, 'I must. Everything is in your hands, and I will obey your commands to the letter, if you can only instruct me how to rid my poor people of this unnameable terror.'

'By God's help I will,' said I; 'but you shall be yet more convinced first, for we have a terrible work to do, and much to answer for in the future, before we leave the church again this morning. And now to work, for in its present weak state the vampire will not wander far, but may return at any time, and must not find us unprepared.'

We stepped down from the pulpit, and taking dog-roses and garlic from the vestry, proceeded to the tomb. I arrived first and, throwing off the wooden cover, cried: 'Look! it's empty!' There was nothing there! Nothing except the impress of the body in the loose damp mould!

I took the flowers and laid them in a circle round the tomb, for legend teaches us that vampires will not pass over these particular blossoms if they can avoid it.

Then, eight or ten feet away, I made a circle on the stone pavement, large enough for the rector and myself to stand in, and within the circle I placed the implements that I had brought into the church with me.

'Now,' I said, 'from this circle, which nothing unholy can step across, you shall see the vampire face to face, and see her afraid to cross that other circle of garlic and dog-roses to regain her unholy refuge. But on no account step beyond the holy place you stand in, for the vampire has a fearful strength not her own, and, like a snake, can draw her victim willingly to his own destruction.'

Now so far my work was done, and, calling the rector, we stepped into the holy circle to await the vampire's return.

Nor was this long delayed. Presently a damp, cold odour seemed to pervade the church, which made our hair bristle and flesh creep. And then, down the aisle with noiseless feet, came That which we watched for.

I heard the rector mutter a prayer, and I held him tightly by the arm, for he was shivering violently.

Long before we could distinguish the features we saw the glowing eyes and the crimson sensual mouth. She went straight to her tomb, but stopped short when she encountered my flowers. She walked right round the tomb seeking a place to enter, and as she walked she saw us. A spasm of diabolical hate and fury passed over her face; but it quickly vanished, and a smile of love, more devilish still, took its place. She stretched out her arms towards us. Then we saw that round her mouth gathered a bloody froth, and from under her lips long pointed teeth gleamed and champed.

She spoke: a soft soothing voice, a voice that carried a spell with it, and affected us both strangely, particularly the rector. I wished to test as far as possible, without endangering our lives, the vampire's power.

Her voice had a soporific effect, which I resisted easily enough, but which seemed to throw the rector into a sort of trance. More than this: it seemed to compel him to her in spite of his efforts to resist.

'Come!' she said, 'come! I give sleep and peace – sleep and peace – sleep and peace.'

She advanced a little towards us; but not far, for I noted that the sacred circle seemed to keep her back like an iron hand.

My companion seemed to become demoralized and spellbound. He tried to step forward and, finding me detain him, whispered: 'Harry, let go! I must go! She is calling me! I must! I must! Oh, help me! help me!' And he began to struggle.

It was time to finish.

'Grant!' I cried, in a loud, firm voice, 'in the name of all that you hold sacred, have done and

play the man!' He shuddered violently and gasped: 'Where am I?' Then he remembered, and clung to me convulsively for a moment.

At this a look of damnable hate changed the smiling face before us, and with a sort of shriek she staggered back.

'Back!' I cried: 'back to your unholy tomb! No longer shall you molest the suffering world! Your end is near.'

It was fear that now showed itself in her beautiful face (for it was beautiful in spite of its horror) as she shrank back, back and over the circlet of flowers, shivering as she did so. At last, with a low mournful cry, she appeared to melt back again into her tomb.

As she did so the first gleams of the rising sun lit up the world, and I knew all danger was over for the day.

Taking Grant by the arm, I drew him with me out of the circle and led him to the tomb. There lay the vampire once more, still in her living death as we had a moment before seen her in her devilish life. But in the eyes remained that awful expression of hate, and cringing, appalling fear.

Grant was pulling himself together.

'Now,' I said, 'will you dare the last terrible act and rid the world for ever of this horror?'

'By God!' he said solemnly, 'I will. Tell me what to do.'

'Help me to lift her out of her tomb. She can harm us no more,' I replied.

With averted faces we set to our terrible task, and laid her out upon the flags.

'Now,' I said, 'read the burial service over the

poor body, and then let us give it its release from this living hell that holds it.'

Reverently the rector read the beautiful words, and reverently I made the necessary responses. When it was over I took the stake and, without giving myself time to think, plunged it with all my strength through the heart.

As though really alive, the body for a moment writhed and kicked convulsively, and an awful heart-rending shriek woke the silent church; then all was still.

Then we lifted the poor body back; and, thank God! the consolation that legend tells is never denied to those who have to do such awful work as ours came at last. Over the face stole a great and solemn peace; the lips lost their crimson hue, the prominent sharp teeth sank back into the mouth, and for a moment we saw before us the calm, pale face of a most beautiful woman, who smiled as she slept. A few minutes more, and she faded away to dust before our eyes as we watched. We set to work and cleaned up every trace of our work, and then departed for the rectory. Most thankful were we to step out of the church, with its horrible associations, into the rosy warmth of the summer morning.

With the above end the notes in my father's diary, though a few days later this further entry occurs:

15*th July*. Since the 12th everything has been quiet and as usual. We replaced and sealed up the 'Sarah Tomb' this morning. The workmen were surprised to find the body had disappeared, but took it to be the natural result of exposing it to the air.

One odd thing came to my ears to-day. It appears that the child of one of the villagers strayed from home the night of the 11th inst., and was found asleep in a coppice near the church, very pale and quite exhausted. There were two small marks on her throat, which have since disappeared.

What does this mean? I have, however, kept it to myself, as, now the vampire is no more, no further danger either to that child or to any other is to be apprehended. It is only those who die of the vampire's embrace that become vampires at death in their turn.